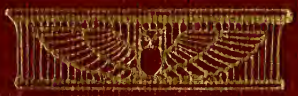
MY DOG AND I

By GERALD SIDNEY



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MY DOG AND I

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BY

GERALD SIDNEY

("HORATIO SPUFFKINS" OF "OUR DOGS")

WITH NUMEROUS ILLUSTRATIONS BY THE AUTHOR

NEW YORK

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1912

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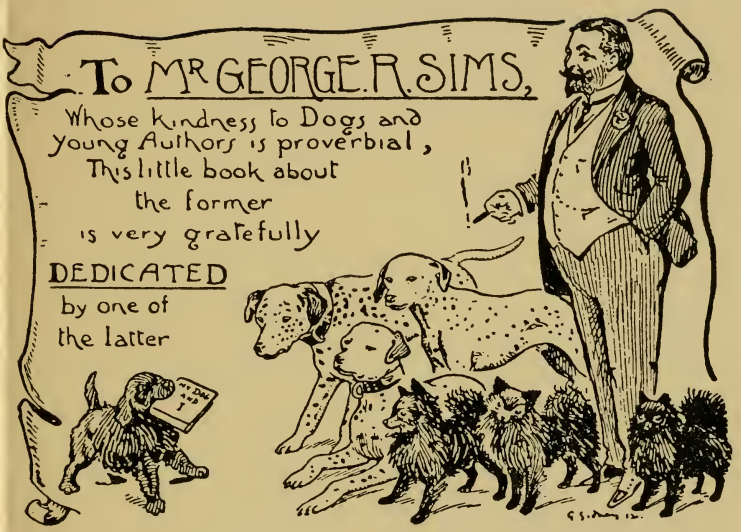
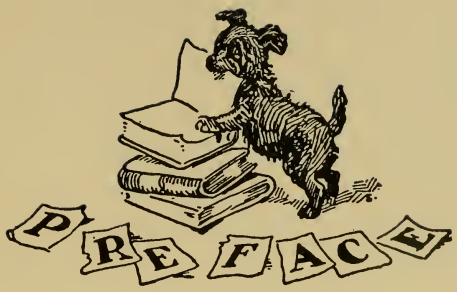
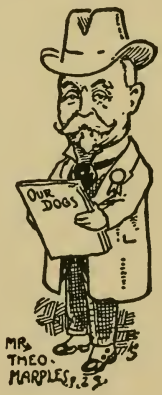

To MR GEORGE R. SIMS,
Whose kindness to Dogs and
young Authors is proverbial,
This little book about
the former
is very gratefully
DEDICATED
by one of
the latter



THIS book is founded on fact, the indisputable fact that if you keep a puppy it will sooner or later form a stumbling-block in your ways of peace; hence it should appeal to all who have suffered at the hands (or rather paws—muddy paws) of the canine species, and will, it is hoped, serve as a warning to those who are on the verge of rashly purchasing a pup without strict inquiry into its moral nature.



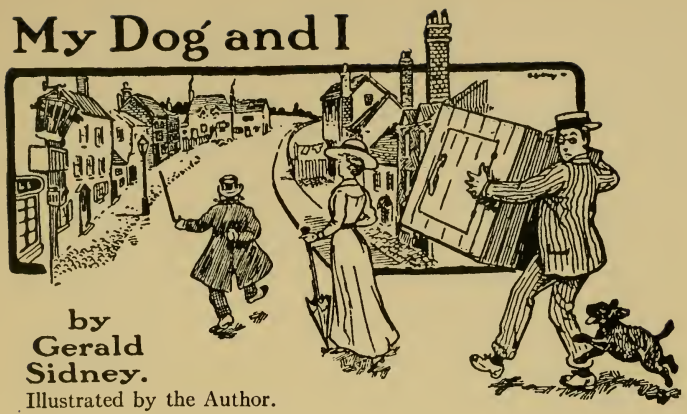
When, several years ago, Mr. Theo. Marples, F. Z. S., the eminent authority on dogs and Editor of *Our Dogs*, gave the Author his start as a writer on and illustrator of dogs from the humorous point of view in the columns of that journal, he (the said Author) always held before himself the solemn ambition that one day he would write a book to expose the awful possibilities inherent in the blandest of puppies.

This is the book.

GERALD SIDNEY.

HASTINGS, 1912.

My Dog and I



by
Gerald
Sidney.

Illustrated by the Author.

CHAPTER I

Introduces the Author and more important people. The advent of the dog, and the arrival of Uncle Boscobel. Which leads up to the episode of the Turkish bath, and the beginning of the dog's machinations.

THE reason this riotous book comes to be written is a four-legged one. To be precise, the cause of all the trouble in it was a pup, a hobbledehoy pup of sable coat and more sable propensities, which led him, and all those who crossed his devastating path, into innumerable misfortunes.

Superficially he was related to the retriever family, although there was an elusive something about his legs which suggested a dachshund ancestor, whilst his mental capacities were without doubt the result of having as forbears the very father and mother of Mischief.

Until he appeared on my placid horizon, life had been to me a benignant, dreamy, arm-chair-and-pipey event. After his arrival it was more like a perpetual motor accident with aeroplane smash effects, an appallingly strenuous affair.

When I, Arthur Dobbs, settled down to business in my native town of Middewick, I had looked forward to a peaceful if unfruitful career, for the essential note of Middewick was peace. It was, indeed, a poetic sort of town, reminding

one vividly of Goldsmith's deserted village, only more so, and just the place for a man desiring quiet in which to work out his ideas. For, you see, I was an inventor. I had arrived at this walk in life by way of much meditation and dabbling with other curious ways of wasting time, and finally entered into my profession through the gentle furnace of an American Correspondence Course, diploma-flying and triumphant. The diploma said I was a fully-fledged inventor, and although nobody else seemed to believe it, I wasn't going to doubt the thing. It was a very fine looking diploma indeed, with pictures of wireless telephones and air craft at the top, and a most artistic figure of Britannia with the Union Jack and Stars and Stripes defying the lightning from the deck of a submarine at the bottom.

It was a summer afternoon, I remember, on which the dog first darkened my blameless life. Middewick market street was basking in the sun, and save for Mr. Gibble, the live stock dealer, whose emporium lay opposite my window, no one was about as I looked over the wire screen. I watched Mr. Gibble bovinely scratching his head for some time, in fact until there came round the corner a girl of twenty or so; not a bad-looking girl either. I may say, in confidence, that I had a very high opinion of her indeed, which she in the past had not reciprocated. It seemed the more I liked her the better she enjoyed making me look about as first-class an idiot as possible. In a word, Pectora Boscobel, the adopted daughter of my Uncle Boscobel, apparently had a secret grudge against mankind, possibly on account of her name, evolved by my Uncle, whose Pectoral Pellets—Boscobel's Pectoral Pellets for Pneumonia, you know—brought her father an enviable income.

Mr. Gibble.

Pectora sailed along until she reached Mr. Gibble's, spoke to him for a moment, and then the two entered his inferno together. I began to feel uneasy, for the night before I'd proposed to her for the seventeenth time, and bitter ex-

perience taught me to expect reprisals shortly. They always followed. Her answer to the last offer of my hand was a booby trap the next time I called. That uncle happened to fall into it instead of me proves nothing, it was intended for me; and although I escaped, Uncle made so many remarks when he found it hadn't been wasted, I was sorry I didn't receive the deluge myself, and so avoid hearing his views on the matter. It took two half-crown packets of his pellets to put his voice right. Therefore I watched the entrance to Gibble's with a kind of feeling as though my heart was trying to see how long it could hold its breath without sneezing.

She sat the pup on my doorstep.

Presently my cousin emerged with a black puppy, blandly fat, in her arms. Mr. Gibble followed with a look of intense relief on his flat face, and recommenced scratching his head. Pectora crossed the road, sat the pup on my doorstep, shook a warning finger at it, and tripped off. I concluded, as she knew I had a certain timidity about dogs, that this was a little attention for the previous night's proposal. I looked obliquely out of the corner of the window at the pup, who put out his tongue at me, and then across at Mr. Gibble, who was now shaking his fist and muttering some weird incantation. By raising the sash, I heard his dulcet tones floating on the still summer air.

"Har!" droned Mr. Gibble. "Har! So I've got shet of ye at larst, ye varmint, 'ave I? Har! No more a-killin' my birdses, my friend! No more a-makin' nestes of my best clo'es, hey, you hugly himp!"

This was the kind of dog planted on me, was it? Nothing like coming with a good reference. I mentally christened the pup "The Demon," and had no reason afterwards to alter the name.

"Hi!" I shouted to Mr. Gibble, "come and take this dog away!"

But Mr. Gibble chose to misunderstand me.

"It is a nice day; you're right, Mr. Dobbs," he nodded cheerily.

"No, take this pup away!" I yelled. "You can have it back. I don't want it. My doctor says on no account must I have a dog near me; it might bring on hydrophobia."

"'Ydrophobia? Fancy you 'aving that! There's a lot of it about, I know," he replied. "I can symperthize with you, sir, for I've got a touch of it meself. Can't a-bear the sight o' water. 'Ave you tried the beer at the Market Head? It's very soothin' for a complaint like ours," he chuckled.

Whilst I was searching for a word fitly to suit the case, there smote upon my ear a flapping sound, as of a small boy being chastened. Well I knew that curious step, as though the owner of it rested his heel gently and then asserted himself by thwacking the balance of his foot down flailwise. It heralded Uncle Boscobel's, my Uncle Boscobel's, approach, no doubt on his way from a Council meeting. I had just time to catch a glimpse of his noble girth and pursy features before he reached my door. He generally looked in on his way home, so I wasn't surprised to see the handle turn.

The door suddenly flew open, and with an unearthly yell a little, fat, elderly man somersaulted into the room, ricochetted off a bench, kicked the back of his head with both heels at once, and with a fearsome screech finally landed on a stone ink jar, where he sat speechless and grampus-like.

The cause of my Uncle's unconventional entrance was obvious, for that pup sat amiably goggling in the open doorway. Something had to be done before the old gentleman got his breath and started discussing the matter, so I

grabbed the impish pup and planted him in Mr. Boscobel's arms, and said—

"My dear Uncle, I'm delighted you dropped in! I have only just bought this highly valuable dog to present to you, for I know you have long been wanting a house dog. You'll find a him splendid guard, and as for his pedigree, well, just look at him!"

There was, fortunately, one weak spot in Uncle's nature, he could never refuse a present. A gift always softened him, and though I had my doubts how far his sense of gratitude would be affected by the pieces of jar sticking in his legs, I hoped for the best. If he would take it, I should be rid of an incubus and Pectora would be out-manœuvered for once.

Uncle's podgy face, over which the pup was fondly slobbering, relaxed, and he heaved his rotundity into a standing position.

"Thankee, my boy! The little beggar certainly tripped me up, but I'll forgive him. What I called for was to see how you were getting on with that what-dye-call-it you were making for me."

"It's finished," I replied.

Amongst many other inventions, I had recently turned my attention to the making of a portable Turkish bath, which, when he referred to a what-dye-call-it, Uncle was recalling. He had taken a lot of interest in the idea, as he had a praiseworthy mind to try to boil some of his adipose tissue off, and had asked me to make one for him. With the help of some planks, matchboarding, and a cheap oil-stove, I had fixed up a very fine one, with a hole at the top for the bather's head, just like the advertisement pictures and, albeit not ornamental, I anticipated it would, as a fat reducer, boil, bake or stew with the best of them.

"There it is," I went on, pointing to a black object some four feet square in a corner. "You try it, and in a week we'll be showing you as a living skeleton."

As he waddled towards it to make a closer inspection, I

heard a rustle, and looking up, saw Pectora coming in. She nodded to her father, and then pointedly remarked—

"I see you have got a dog, Arthur! I hope you'll be kind to it."

"Yes," I answered unblushingly, "I bought it as a present for Uncle, and he's going to take it home."

Even this did not stay my cousin. She merely took another tack.

"What's that ugly thing, dad?"

"That's a Turkish bath Arthur's made for me, my dear. I'm going to have it sent home and try it at once."

She took her opportunity.

"How nice!" she said. "I'm sure you must be dying to try it! Why not ask Arthur to bring it home for you now?"

"Oh, I can send the gardener down for it," said Uncle in a muffled voice from the interior of the bath, where he was trying the stove with considerable paraffinal success.

"He's ill with a cold, so I gave him some pellets and sent him home," romanced Pectora cheerfully, and before I knew it, had persuaded her father that I was madly anxious to drag the thing through the street.

"Very well, come along both of you," said Uncle, and flapped off.

It was an impressive procession, enhanced by the audible remarks of Mr. Gibble, who was a delighted spectator, about carrying coffins to save paying undertakers. First went Uncle, with his feet bravely smacking the pavement; then came Pectora, endeavoring to look as though she didn't belong to us; then myself, groaning under the weight of the bath; and lastly the pup, who alternately worried my heels and took flying leaps at my burden.

It reminded one of the dear old Christy Minstrel carol—

"Sister Mary walks like this,"

only it should have begun with—

"Here comes Uncle, slow and fat,"

to be quite in keeping. The most agonizing thing about that parade was the behavior of the Demon. You see each time he playfully leaped at me I lost my balance, and only saved the fruit of my inventive faculties from crashing into firewood by letting it fall on me instead of the road, a proceeding which so pleased the Demon that he insisted on several encores.

We reached Uncle's villa at last; and after an exciting struggle in the doorway, during which, to my delight, I found I'd pinned the pup against the jamb, I fell into the hall with the bath. Pectora watched my efforts coldly, whilst the Demon, who caught my eye as I emerged from under that awful box, gave me such a malicious grin that I kicked out at him, unfortunately landing Uncle on the shin, causing him to let out the howl of a soul in torment. After an interval of electric silence and suppressed gout, he and I staggered upstairs with the bath, and planted it in his dressing-room. As I again explained the way to light the stove, climb in and shut the door, he impetuously disrobed. I was reminded that the pup was about by seeing it trotting round the room with a flannel vest in its silly mouth.

"Now you can go down and talk to Pectora," said Uncle, as he coyly prepared to enter the boiling chamber.

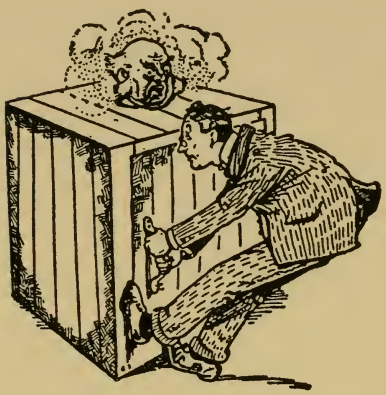
So I did; at least, I meant to. Pectora, on my coming into the drawing-room, walked with a pained expression into the garden, and on my following her, stalked back to the house and shut herself in the library. She was a great believer in this kind of discipline for mere men creatures, and I can commend it to any lady who wishes to make anyone uncomfortable and at the same time extremely apologetic for unknown *faux pas*. I tried the library door half heartedly, but it was locked, and was wandering aimlessly about the hall when a tremendous bellow from upstairs shook the house.

I rushed up to Uncle's room. Beyond the fact that his face, which was all I could see of him, was purpler than usual, he seemed to be stewing nicely.

"What's the matter?" I exclaimed.

"That dog! Find it at once!"

It struck me he must have taken a violent fancy to the Demon to want him at such a time, unless it was he wished to give him a boil up too, but I contented myself with thinking only.



"That dog's inside here!"

"Where is it, Uncle?" I asked mildly.

"Inside here, you fool!" he yelled. "His beastly hair is tickling something awful. Open the door, can't you, idiot, and get him out!"

By pulling hard on my side, and vigorous if painful kicks on his, the door came open, and out strolled the Demon, perspiring and happy. Seeing Uncle was about to lift up his voice, I got out of the room on the pretense of taking the pup downstairs, and spent the next ten minutes in the hall thinking out new names to call it.

My meditations were broken by the sudden appearance of Pectora, who sniffed dubiously, and seeing me, asked—

"Is anything on fire?"

Following the direction of her eyes, I saw coming down the staircase volumes of highly aromatic smoke of a soupy consistency. It seemed to be coming from the direction of Uncle's room too, so I dashed upstairs, and Pectora fled to the library, uttering sharp squeaks. Possibly she meant them for ladylike screams, but, in effect, squeaks they were.

The first thing that struck me was that Uncle was being fricasseed alive, his noble face looming black as ink through a fog of smoke.

"The stove's smoking!" he gasped. "Let me out!"

"Can't you undo the door yourself?" I blew, as I struggled with it; but before he had time to reply, it came off its hinges with a bang, which threw me backwards most acrobatically. I had a vision of pink limbs paddling furiously before the fog of smoke closed in again.

"Confound you, my head's stuck now!" he howled, as though it was my fault.

"Wriggle it," I suggested hopefully, at which—well, it was a good thing he got some smoke down his throat before he got really into his swing as an orator. Gingerly approaching, I observed that the poor old fellow's neck had swollen with the heat, and when I ventured to hint at sawing him out he gave such a fearful plunge, I thought it best to evaporate. My agitation was not smoothed by stumbling over the Demon four steps from the bottom of the stairs, and landing heapishly and sheepishly at the feet of Pectora, who was gazing up towards her father's room and holding her ears.

"I've telephoned," she announced suddenly.

"Telephoned? Where to?" I asked.

"The fire station. They'll be here soon."

"But there isn't a fire," I said angrily.

"What about the smoke, then?"

I stood up.

"It's that awful dog of yours!" I exploded. "It's all through him. He must have turned the wick up whilst he was scuffling inside there, and made it smoke."

"I don't understand you, Arthur," she answered sweetly. "My dog? Why, you know I never had one."

"Who's is it, then? Didn't I see you buy it at Gibble's and plant it on my doorstep?"

Pectora raised her eyebrows.

"I don't know what you mean. How can it be mine when I distinctly heard you tell dad you'd bought it as a present for him?"

She was evidently enjoying herself more than I was, and I hardly knew how to answer conclusively; but I was saved

from getting further into the mire by a thundering at the front door. I stepped forward and opened it, to be nearly knocked down by a strenuous brass helmet with a man inside it; at the same instant a glimpse of a fire-engine, an escape, and more brass helmets, backed by an enthusiastic crowd of Middewick's slum *élite*, pointed to interesting developments.

"Where's th' foire?" asked the brassy one, glaring round and snorting.

"My good fellow," I explained, "there wasn't a fire. It was a dog, you see. It turned the lamp up in the bath, you know."

The gentleman with the brass head-dress regarded me for a moment, and tapping his forehead in a most significant manner, asked—

"Loony?"

"I beg your pardon?"

"'Ave you been like that long? If there weren't no fire, what for did ye telephone for?"

"I didn't. It was a young lady. She——"

"Ho! it's a young lady now. Thought ye said 'twas a leetle dog or a bath, didn't ye? Where's your keeper? I can't waste time on you. Bill," he called to another canned individual who was feverishly trailing a large hose pipe across the lawn, "Bill, I never knew this 'ouse were an asylum! 'Ere's the prize boy of the lot tellin' me all about it, pretty dear."

"Asylum be hanged!" I roared. "I tell you it was the Demon."

"Pore young feller!" soothed Bill, who had joined his friend. "'Ark! There's some more on 'em upstairs, George. 'Ear 'em bashin' round?"

They both stood listening with their mouths open, whilst Bill's hose squished aimlessly about the hall.

There certainly was a terrible crashing going on above; and seeing Messrs. Brasshat and Co.'s expression change from vacuity to horror, I turned round.

Bounding down the stairs came a stumpy, fat apparition, coal black, with a sheet tied round its waist, and a large wooden arrangement hanging round its neck.

"What's this?" it blared, as it cavorted ragefully. "What in blazes are those tin-potted maniacs gibbering there for?"

Bill and George gave a despairing wail and fell down the steps, picked themselves up, flung their helmeted frames across the flower-beds, and scrambling on the fire-engine, clattered off at full gallop, the escape following. The crowd divided, half to follow the firemen, half to cheer the apparition.

A coal black apparition came bounding downstairs.

"Good ole Uncle Bones!" they cried. "Give us a song!"

"Shut that door!" stormed the black man.

Through the soot I discerned Uncle Boscobel's false teeth chattering with rage.

"That stokehole of yours!" he gnashed at me.

"It wasn't the fault of the bath, it was the dog," I interjected.

"Yes, I know it was that dog," he screamed, vainly trying to wrap a little more sheet round him; "your soot machine and your dog!" He tore frenziedly at his wooden necklace. "You take your precious dog away, or never speak to me again! D'y hear? Take it *away!* TAKE IT AWAY!"

"All right, Uncle, I will. Only let me get hold of the brute——"

A voice from behind the library door broke in—

"Oh, how cruel he sounds, dad! Don't let him be unkind to the poor thing! "

"Certainly not, my dear," sputtered Uncle. "Listen to me, Arthur," he added, with a wrench that tore about a yard

off his sheet uniform. "You take that dog home and treat it kindly, my boy, or else I'll cut you out of my will."

He glared and fumed for a space.

"Thank you, dad," came from the library.

All this time the Demon had been placidly sitting, watching us contemptuously. As Uncle sailed majestically upstairs I made a dive for the pup. I daren't offend Uncle, so I had better take it home, and the sooner the better.

The Demon, seeing me dive, thought it was some new game, and dived too through the glass window in the door into the garden. I followed, and for half an hour we trampled that garden and all that therein was to everlasting mush. The Demon at last lay down beside the little pond it pleases Uncle to call the lake. Warily approaching, I made a grab, lost my balance, and plunged into a choice three feet of duckweed, frogs and green water.

As I clambered out I saw three things—one, the dog disappearing through the gate; another, Pectora smiling from the library window; and the third, Uncle, black and stormy, dancing a tempestuous rage ballet at the window above.

Wearily I dragged to the gate. The Demon had vanished. Had he (blessed thought!) gone for good? I hugged the idea as I dripped home. I reached the door. On the steps sat the Demon, expectant. I broken-heartedly turned the key, and entered with the pup at my heels.

CHAPTER II

In which my friend Hawk makes his bow, and we discuss the situation. Hawk evolves a novel, and the dog absorbs the supper. A strenuous night adventure ensues, in which we differ with P. C. Harker on the matter of a burglary.

THE Demon stopped a moment on the mat and then followed me upstairs, avoiding three hearty backward kicks in a most disgustingly artful manner, and retrieved the shoe which had come off when I kicked out, in a condition of slobber worthy of a prize baby.

I lit the gas and sank wearily into a chair in my sitting-room, which, with the bedroom adjoining, formed my bachelor quarters. These were on the first floor of an aged house of the break-your-neck-if-you-stand-up order, a house with a tendency to lengthy passages leading nowhere in particular and cupboard-like rooms of no available use.

The floor below was taken up by my workshop and office. The one above was empty, save for creaks and groans, and the attics were inhabited by a growing family of mice, with occasional lodgers in the shape of the local cats, who from time to time dropped in for a mouse soirée.

Sometimes on the attic stairs I would find two or three hungry and miserable kittens, orphaned in an unfriendly world. These, out of kindness, I treated with a pail of water, and the world wagged on heartlessly two or three kittens the less. It may seem reprehensible, perhaps, and had they been Persians matters might have been different, but as they were generally the progeny of the most crippled specimens of Middewick's stray cat population, one had to be cruel to be kind, as it were.

This evening, though, my usual joy in home comforts was warped. When you sit meditating in wet clothes, that cling to you even as a confidence trick man, you feel warpy. In

looking round for something to throw at the Demon, I noticed the little brute was lying on the mat worrying a letter. Evidently he had found it in the passage; and after playing a game of touch with him, in which he was "it" and I was doing the touching with the poker, I obtained possession of the mangled epistle.

Hawk.

It was from my friend Hawk, and his screeds were usually interesting. He was one of those fellows who pretend they are fearfully busy, and always telegraph when a letter would do; and to even things up, write long rigmaroles on odd bits of paper when a telegram is necessary. This one was scrawled on a piece of the *Evening News*, over the cricket scores, and informed me that he, Hawk, would be glad if I could put him up that night, he being on a tour in search of local color, whatever he might imagine that was. Therefore he'd land at Middewick Station at nine o'clock, and incidentally hoped the inventing business was looking up, and did I remember that last night we had together, what?

Well, it was evident he'd like to be met, so as the time was getting on I locked the Demon in the attic, and after changing into dryer clothes, went forth to meet my friend.

But for a tendency to being put up and borrowing postage stamps, Hawk was not a bad fellow; moreover, I wanted to unburden my harassed soul about the pup to someone, so I was not sorry he was coming. I would certainly ask his advice about it. He was absolutely a ghoul on advice, and you could always depend on it too. Do exactly the opposite to what he said, and you came out successfully every time.

By profession Hawk considered himself an author. It was fortunate he had a little money of his own. He called himself a writer on the strength of an impossible detective tale some misguided publisher of healthy literature for office

boys had accepted in the dim past; also, on the strength of that same yarn (*Doomed to Destruction; or Detective Donald Dashit's Daring*), he cultivated a sleuth-hound personality. To state to him a thing had happened never satisfied Hawk. He wanted to find out when and why, what motive was at the bottom of it, had the body been found, and if so what had become of the villain's jeweled dagger? and so forth. Further, he insisted on dressing the part, a kind of Sherlock Holmes rig out—soft hat, long frock-coat, briar pipe, general aroma of stale shag, and a piercing eye. There the likeness stopped, as he was both short and embonpointish.

As the train drew up, I saw his animated countenance at a carriage window, and hastened to greet him. His first words as he shook hands showed his practical outlook on life, albeit a writer of fiction.

"Well met, Dobbs!" he cried. "Where's the refreshment-room?"

As he rattled on, the local color he referred to in his letter turned out to be a desire to avoid his recently-widowed landlady, who having just buried her third husband, was beginning to look up and take notice again, and in his direction.

"But at the same time," said Hawk, "I really am looking for local color, and a plot as well. The Editor of *The Errand Lads' Gazette*, who has read that novel of mine—yes, I said Novel, Dobbs—told me the other day that if I could knock him up another one, a little more bloodthirsty, he'd consider it. The worst of it is I'm hung up for a plot."

"How about something supernatural, eh?" I asked.

"Yes," he assented, "yes, that's not bad. Must be strong, you know. Revolvers, ghost turns out to be an anarchist, or something like that, what?"

"Introduce a demon dog into it," I suggested, "a dog which casts a blight on all it meets, and leaves a trail of tortured humans anathematizing its memory. Call it the 'Mongrel Malevolent,' and there you are."

"Not a bad idea, but rather far-fetched," he approved, "because the general feeling is that dogs are more delightful

than fiendish. If there had been such a dog, now, it would be different."

We had reached my house, and looking up, I saw the Demon silhouetted against the sky with something hanging from his jaws.

"I'll show you one in half a minute," said I, leading Hawk to the sitting-room, where he sat down and wheezed genially.

Leaving him scraping out his powerful pipe preparatory to poisoning the atmosphere with his favorite weed (weed was an appropriate name for it), I went up to the attic to investigate. Three kittens lay on the floor mewing sadly, and the Demon was looking into the room through the broken window with another kitten dangling from his mouth, which he dropped on seeing me. I had no time to admire his evident anxiety to father the orphaned offspring of stray cats, so I clutched him quickly and dragged him down to Hawk.

The Demon was looking into the room.

"There's the identical," I said, as Hawk foolishly patted him with his foot, and I related the incidents of the day, with emphasis on the way Pectora had treated me and with much strength of verbiage on the Demon's character.

Hawk, like the unsympathetic idiot he is, roared with laughter.

"That's only the dog's fun, old man. Your natural dislike to the species has influenced you against him. Now, as far as I can see from the facts (and facts, my dear Dobbs, as I have often pointed out to you, are arrived at by scientific deduction, and never by assumption)——"

He filled his pipe, and lay back in his chair tapping his extended fingers gently together.

"Go on," I growled bitterly, "go the whole Holmes. I

haven't a copy of *The Times* to lend you for you to see the Agony Column, but *The Middewick Observer* is within reach, and there's plenty of agonized journalese in that. If you'd like a dressing-gown there is one available, and I'll pretend to be Doctor Watson, shall I?"

"Don't get shirty," said the little man. "We authors get so saturated with the types we write of that our personalities sometimes merge. I don't think much of the dog idea; but this young woman, Pectora, appeals to me as a likely heroine."

"How would you develop the plot?"

Hawk mused.

"Of course, I should start with the usual murder, and introduce a crime investigator. The crime is traced to poisoned cough-drops. Here we could bring in Pectora, see? She—I think you said she was pretty?—she is desperately smitten with the detective, and on being discovered confesses to administering the fatal lozenge, but promises him her hand and heart if he will keep her secret. Yes, so far that's good."

"Who'd you draw your detective from?"

"My own personality would suggest——" began Hawk.

"Look here," I said hotly, "I don't so much mind you introducing Pectora in a reasonable way, but to make her admit a crime she is not capable of, and on top of that throw herself at the head of an under-sized paunchy imitation of a detective, is more than I can stand."

"You're very personal; besides, you've got it all wrong," said Hawk in a pained voice. "She wasn't the *real* poisoner, you know; she only *said* she was."

"What on earth for?"

"For love of the detective, of course," replied the idiot with a far-away look.

"Heavens! she'd never look at you. Hates little fat men. Besides, if she didn't do the thing, who did?"

"Why, the comic man! All tales need comic relief, you know, my boy, and for this purpose I should introduce a sort of polite lunatic. It was he who administered that death-

dealing cough-drop, sir, not the heroine. I should lay myself out over that character—make him do some of the fat-headedest things imaginable, and always be in hot water, you know, what? "

Hawk's inane "what?" ever annoyed me to the verge of running amok, so I snorted angrily at him——

"Huh! What would you make him be, another detective? "

"An inventor!" he said blandly. "Just a fool inventor!"

"I suppose you mean to libel me?" My voice rose. "It would be like you. What have I done to be accused of giving your deceased poisoned cough-drops, eh? "

"Oh, you didn't poison him intentionally!" soothed Hawk.

"Then why did I give them to him? "

"Because there was apparently nothing else to offer him—no food, supper, lubricants," he meaningly answered.

Then it was I realized that Hawk was both hungry and pulling my leg, and got up to provide for him.

Now for a fellow who catered for himself, it flattered me to think that my commissariat was pretty fair, and I soon found a tin of salmon, half a ham, some splendid jam (what if the bloater paste had upset in it? the flavor would be more piquant), cheese, bread, butter, and several cooked sausages. There was an egg, too; but not having its birth certificate, this I shunned. I knew those eggs one comes upon in odd corners. They are rather less eggs than what the chefs term "Bombs en surprise."

"Anything to drink? " asked Hawk anxiously.

"I've got some downstairs," I reassured him.

"I'm a bit of a connooser in such matters," said Hawk; "I'll come and help you carry them up."

We were just reascending the stairs again when he gave a sudden gurgle, and shouting, "We left the dog in the room! " tore past me; but it was too late. We'd both forgotten the Demon. The Demon, however, had not forgotten the supper. The ham was gone; the bone peeped from under the sofa. The sausages were but a memory. As for the butter, the pup had got it plastered over his back legs, evidently having used

it as a cushion the while he dealt with the ham. He himself lay growling under the table, making savage attempts on the tin of salmon. Fortunately, the bread and cheese were unmolested; and after I had hunted the Demon into the attic again, we made some sort of meal.

"I begin to believe what you urge against that dog," remarked Hawk after supper. "I've got a splendid idea," he went on, suddenly laying a revolver on the table, "shoot it."

"Good goodness!" I shouted, falling backwards, chair and all. "Put that down, you crazy idiot! Where did you get it?"

"Oh," he nonchalantly replied, "I always carry one. One never knows, and in running a desperate criminal to earth a gun comes in handy, old chap. You take this and pot the beggar, and there you are."

"That's all very well," I said, edging away from the weapon, with which Hawk was covering various articles of furniture with one eye cocked as who should say, "Another word, and you're a dead sofa." "That's all very well, but Uncle knows I've got no pistol, and—oh, put it away, there's a good chap! you'll be killing someone in a minute."

He gazed affectionately at his murderous weapon, and with obvious reluctance pocketed it, and then launched into an interminable yarn about what he'd do if he met a burglar, and the tale had so many ramifications that it was midnight before he shut up.

We said good-night then; and as he was my more or less honored guest, and I only possessed one bed, I gave this up to him with the best grace I could muster, and made shift with the sofa myself.

Putting the gas out, I turned in, or rather on, and tried to sleep; but sleep came not. An elusive insect, once the property of the Demon, assisted in keeping me awake, and when that had quietened down I suddenly remembered we'd left the front door ajar when we first came in, and incidentally there were no matches in the room. Well, I wasn't going to ramble about the house in the middle of

the night, so let the door stop as it was. A high wind was moaning down the chimney and rattling the windows, and during a lull in it I distinctly heard something moving overhead. Had someone got through that beastly open door and prowled around promiscuously? I jumped off the sofa, groped for and found the poker, and creeping to the door, listened intently.

Footsteps! creepy-crawly footsteps! I heard them shuffle along the passage, turn the corner, then—silence! I held my breath. The Demon's little friend started in some unreachable place, and what with that and the tension I nearly burst. It couldn't be the Demon, I argued. What I heard were human, nasty, stealthy, human steps. A burglar? I wouldn't wake Hawk, because he'd chaff if I was mistaken. Should I dare? . . . The poker was a fairly hefty one. One might crack a skull with it easily, eh? I visualized the sickly thud as iron met bone, and trying its weight, proved the sickliness of the thud when iron met shin. All of which—the poker, the Demon's friend, and the footsteps—enraged me so, I decided to sally forth. I opened the door softly. The passage was pitch dark, no sound at the moment audible but my own wheezing and the wind's moan. Softly and catlike I slid along, groping before me. I reached the corner and turned. This was where the footsteps had ceased . . . was it an ambush? My outstretched hand struck something soft—a face. I felt the eyebrow as I raised my deadly weapon, but the poker fell, not on a skull, but the floor, as something cold brushed my temple.

"Hands up! Not a word or you're a dead man!" hissed a voice. "Dare to say a word and I'll——"

There was a flash, a bang, and some plaster fell; but, thank goodness, I was as yet unscathed, and the flash had revealed to me the homely features of Hawk.

"Dobbs, you fool, I took you for him!" "Hawk, you ass, I thought you were he!" burst simultaneously.

"Hst!" added Hawk, "I didn't mean the thing to go off. Have you seen it?"

"Seen what? I certainly heard footsteps, but it must have been you."

"No. I awoke suddenly, feeling there was someone in my room. The door was open, and I saw a dark form slide out by it. Did you lock up?"

"No, we left the front door open when we came in."

"Then it's either a burglar or——"

"Or?"

"A prowling maniac!" he snarled. "There was one escaped recently near here; saw it in the paper. Bet you he's armed too. Knife or something. Hst!"

Something was moving on the stairs, scuffling along the wall . . . then still. What was it? I peered daringly over the banisters, and saw the hall door wide open, and what looked like a black bag on the step. I drew back. From the stairs came stertorous breathing. Was it the Demon after all? But no, for a muffled footstep mounted slowly, step by step; besides, a burglar wouldn't leave a bag on the front step, would he? It must be the maniac. We cowered against the passage wall . . . a something came closer, closer . . . and all at once we were lying on the floor with the maniac on top.

"Help! Murder!" yelled Hawk the brave.

To which a breathless voice replied bitingly—

"I'll 'elp yer in 'alf a minute. Burglin' Mr. Dobbs, was yer? Not as 'e's worth burglin'; but I've got yer both, and thank 'eaven I'm 'eavy enough to keep yer down. This means promotion for me, sure's my name's 'Arker."

I gasped with relief. It was Harker, the Middewick policeman.

"Let us get up, and I'll explain. Show your lantern, you goat," I demanded.

"Promise you'll keep quiet, then?" asked Harker.

"All right," I agreed.

To which remark that idiot Hawk added—

"It's a fair cop. We'll go quiet, guv'nor."

He always overdid things in his striving after effect.

Harker let us get up, did something to his lantern, and flashed a light on us.

"Why, it's Mr. Dobbs!' he ejaculated. "Just my luck."

Then his face brightened, and thrusting his lantern into my hand, he made an elephantine spring at my unfortunate friend. Down went poor old Hawk under the tonnage of the law, and the triumphant Harker wriggled into a sitting position on the chest of the crime investigator.

"As proper a catch as ever I see," panted the policeman. "Don't you be afeard, Mr. Dobbs, I've got un. Pistol, eh?" he continued, picking up the fallen revolver and dandling it nervously. "Ho, yes, you murderin' villain"—he gave an accusatory bounce, and Hawk groaned—" 'tempted—murder — burglaring— an'— resistin'— th' police— in—'scution— of —'s duty. The bench'll send yer to the Sessions, and I'll get made sergeant. It'll be five years for yer, my friend. Why, if you 'ad shot Mr. Dobbs the town 'd 'alf lynch yer. We ain't got many things to laugh at 'ere to be able to spare 'im."

I thought it time to break in.

"Look here, Harker, you've made a mistake. In fact, it's all a mistake. That's Mr. Hawk, a friend of mine. Let him up, there's a good chap."

But Harker was not going to lose his prey without a struggle.

"No, Mr. Dobbs," he said, wagging a fat face at me, "it does yer credit, but no, sir."

"What does me credit?"

"Your kindness of 'eart. Nothin' short of Christian, I calls it; but it won't do. It's kind of you to try to shield 'im, but look at 'is face. That gives 'im away. Criminal ain't in it."

As Hawk was going a pretty shade of violet by then, I decided on swift measures, and putting the lantern down, went to the rescue. Harker was about as light as half a ton of coal, the larger half, but by throwing all my weight on his

manly chest I managed to roll him off Hawk. The latter was naturally savage, and before I could stop him, he leapt astride the policeman's waist and began to pommel him scientifically. Thus offended, the majesty of the law began to thrash around distressfully with its legs, and catching me sideways, threw me half down the stairs, to the top of which our struggles had led us. This riled me; so throwing caution to the winds, I sailed in to Hawk's assistance.

Harker had somehow got hold of the banisters at the top, and although I sat on his legs whilst Hawk played five fist exercises on his chest and face, his arms were free, and with a crash a portion of the banisters and rail came away in his grasp, looking like some gigantic comb. With this the policeman seemed likely to do some fancy work, which neither of us relished. It was getting light enough to see that the broken banister had left an unguarded pit, and the struggles of Harker were bringing us nearer and nearer to the edge. As it was, the strenuous rise and fall of his frame was making me feel sea-sick, and the thought of what would be the end of it all made me sicker still.

"You—pair—o'—g'rooters!" blew the struggling Harker. "It's a plant to murder the p'lice. Let me get up, and I'll get yer life sentences each."

Hawk's answer was a bounce which shook all the breath out of the prostrate man, and taking advantage of this, Hawk reached behind him and got his revolver, which he gingerly held to the startled face of his victim.

"Now, my friend," panted Hawk, "if we let you get up, will you forget this little incident, which I assure you is caused through a misunderstanding?"

Harker looked askance at the revolver, and choked a faint "Yes."

With a satisfied smile my friend laid down his weapon.

"No!" suddenly shouted Harker, and gave a tremendous writhe which brought us to the edge of the landing, and with a sickening celerity over it—bang, crash, thud —on to the stairs, where we lay a confused, silent mass.

Making quite sure I was dead, I lay still and awaited developments. Then I heard Hawk's voice—

"Are you alive?"

"I doubt it. Are you?" I asked.

Bang, crash, thud—

"Yes, I fell on something soft," said Hawk; and now he came to mention it I had done so also.

"It's him," went on Hawk in a matter-of-fact tone.

It was. The valiant Harker lay under us unnaturally still.

"He's dead," continued Hawk cheerily. "We'd better bury him in the garden before it gets day, and say we know nothing about it."

"You cold-blooded brute!" I whispered fiercely. "I can feel his heart beating. Help me drag him up to the bedroom."

I've lifted things—that Turkish bath amongst them—but Harker was the pride of them all. It would have been better had he been made on the wardrobe system, so he could have been taken to bits and carried that way. When we had got him to bed we sat exhaustedly gazing on him and each other.

"Was there a burglar really?" I asked at last in a weary voice.

"No," snapped Hawk. "Didn't you see what it was?"

"I was, if I may say so, too busy to see much else than stars. What was it, then?"

"Why, that infernal dog. He's asleep in the doorway now. Must have been creeping about the house to start with and finished up by getting the front door wide open; then my revolver going off was heard by this officious ass, who came in to investigate."

"I might have known it was the Demon. But what about this chap? Shake him up, and try to bring him round."

Hawk caught the senseless man by the collar and shook him frenziedly. At last Harker opened his eyes.

"Leave off, Jane," he sighed, "I'll get up in a minute." Then, seeing us, he gave a bewildered stare round the room. "Where are I? What's happened?"

I must say Hawk had a really fine imagination. Without pause he started—

"Why, my poor fellow, you've had an accident. Mr. Dobbs and I were awaked by a scrimmage, and were just in time to see you and two men roll over the banisters on to the stairs. The scoundrels fell on you and knocked you senseless, but being practically unharmed themselves—ahem!—made good their escape."

"Eh?" asked the policeman with growing incredulity.

"And," went on Hawk blithely, "as you were coming to we were debating whether to give you a sovereign for your bravery and let the matter rest, for the men have got away empty-handed, or to let you take up the case, which, as there are no clues, will not do you any good."

"Ah!" said Harker with a shrewd look, "seein' as they're gone, p'raps it ain't much use a-follerin' them. But I must report it, any'ow. Will you gents speak as to my bravery and devotion t' duty?"

"Rather," said Hawk, thoughtfully rubbing a lump on his head; and between us we then applied palm oil to Harker's honorable scars, and flattery to his prowess.

It was quite seven o'clock when Harker left, beaming if sore. We saw him to the door, where we found the Demon whetting his appetite with the contents of my matutinal milk-can.

CHAPTER III

Shows the blackness of things in general, and Uncle in particular. The dog gets mixed up with old Mrs. Gibble, and Uncle gets mixed up with some varnish. Hawk's scheme to smooth things over and the way he did it leads us to fly from the town until the incident is forgotten.

HAWK and I watched the receding figure of the valiant Harker, and then turned our attention to the Demon, who, having finished the milk, was trying a mouthful of doormat till the next course came along.

"To think," said Hawk with a yawn, "an ordinary pup like that could have done so much in less than twenty-four hours. So far as I can see, if he laid himself out properly he'd knock an earthquake silly; and talking of dogs, I'm tired—a-weary, my dear chap—and would rest, so I'll turn in and have a snooze on your downy couch."

With which remark he turned abruptly and went upstairs. That was just like Hawk. He knew I was a jolly sight tireder than he was, and yet bagged the only bed I'd got before I thought of doing so. If there's one thing I detest it is a lazy, selfish spirit.

The Demon had ambled after Hawk, and I was about to close the door, when a fat and blowsy maiden in the uniform of servility, minus a few important buttons, amply made up for by an unnecessary supply of haircurlers, scurried up with, "Miss—Pectorial"—gasp—"told me—to—give—you"—snort—"this 'ere, sir"—gasp—and thrust a note into my hand. Then she wiped her heated brow with the corner of a dainty apron of many strange tints, and coyly frisked off.

I took the note up with me, with a view to perusing it quietly on the sofa, but I found my sitting-room already occupied by the lady who "did" me up, as she called it, every morning. I believe in the more aristocratic books such individuals are referred to as laundresses; but anyway, no one

could thus label my ancient dame truthfully by such a name, for I doubt me much if she knew anything about washing, let alone laundries.

Mrs. Gibble was the mother of the Emporium's keeper, and was well matured to the extent of incipient mummyfication. Her complexion was a melancholy Whistler-like gray, though the red rims of her eyes gave a dash of color to the otherwise dreary prospect, and on bright days the sun would catch the perpetual dewdrop at the end of her romanesque nose, so that it flashed like a very jewel. Imagine a slightly animated guttering candle, bent in the middle, and savoring somewhat like the inside of a four-wheeler on a wet day, and you have Mrs. Gibble. Her aged gums kept up a steady mowing, a characteristic which had so interested me that I once asked her worthy son what particular cud she ruminated on, and was informed that "pore old mar chews terbaccer." There he spoke sooth, for I incidentally found that it was my own tobacco the old lady masticated, and having no teeth to take up valuable space in her dainty mouth, she could accommodate about an ounce at a time. So I took drastic action. Steeping some finely-shredded leather in the liquid obtained from boiling three old pipes, I filled my tobacco-jar with the product. Next day the jar was empty, but Mrs. Gibble still chumped away like fun, and continued doing so for weeks, so I concluded that quid was lasting her nicely.

On my entrance the dear old soul was in a heap on the table, with the Demon war-dancing round her.

The Demon war-danced round her.

"To think," she wailed, "as in me old age I sh'd be killed by a feend of a 'ound! If I'd knowed you 'ad a dog mum-budgettin' about I'd 'ave took the lor of ye."

As I could see there would be no chance of quietly reading Pectora's note until her ladyship was gone, I hastened her departure with half a crown, without prejudice on her side to setting her son on me, and after reprimanding the Demon with the biggest stick I could find, I opened the note, which read as follows—

"You must help me out of the horrid scrape you have got us all into. After your wicked bath, father asked me for something to get the black off with, and in my agitation"—agitation was good——"I gave him some varnish in mistake for lavender water,* and now it's *fixed the black on.* Of course, I daren't tell him what it was, so I put it down to your nasty stove. You must come up at once and quiet him, and undo your atrocious handywork. I am sure if we could see through the black he would be purple underneath, and his language is awful, but *I've hidden all the knives.* Considering your dog is at the bottom of it all, the least you can do is to come at once."

"Phew! Quieten him!" I gasped, as I collapsed on the sofa. For a girl of her years Pectora was pretty cool. The calm way she shifted the trouble on to me was worthy of a Russian diplomat. Any way I looked at it, something would have to be done, so I tore into the bedroom and shook the snoring Hawk by the throat and yelled, "Wake up, you callous idiot, there's more trouble brewing, and you've got to help."

"Whassermarrer?" gurgled the somnolent author. "Leggo, gorrosleep. Seey' tomorr—snawk."

I dragged him from the bed, and flung him, sack-like, on the floor, then soused him with the water jug's contents. At this he actually did half wake up.

"All right, old man; never mind me, I can swim," he spluttered. "You go in the boat and—hullo, it's you, is it? What's up now? More Demon?"

* Author's Note.—Copal varnish smells like lavender water.

"Several of 'em. Read that."

I thrust the letter into his hand, and flung about feverishly whilst he leisurely read it.

"Looks bad for you, my son," he chortled between fits of laughter. "Fancy having a nigger minstrel Nunky! Can you see him playing the bones, or would the artistic coon dance be more suited to his fairy personality?"

A well-planted kick sobered the idiotic fellow for a bit, and he shook his head.

"Candidly, I don't like the look of it. I suppose you want me to help you out of the mess?"

"If you can. Get that romantic imagination to work and suggest things before I do something desperate."

Hawk, who was still sitting on the floor in a pool of water, pondered. At last his fish-like eye gleamed.

"Has Nunky ever seen me?"

"No, this black business is the first shock he's ever had. Do you mean that the sight of you might complete things, and finish his troubles for ever?" I asked bitterly.

"Don't be childish. I've a plan. I'll come with you, and you introduce me as a physician you've specially got down from London. That ought to please him!—nephewly love, and all that, what? Then leave the rest to me."

"You'd make a fine-looking doctor, upon my word."

"As good a doctor as you are inventor, old boy. It's the only way out."

"But what can you do when you get there?"

"That'll come to me shortly. Buck up and lead the way, my child. This water's jolly cold to sit in. You've a funny way of waking visitors up. I'll be dressed in a tick."

In a few minutes Hawk was ready. He had calmly borrowed the best part of my wardrobe to dress the part, and he wanted to add a pair of whiskers made from the goatskin hearthrug, but I vetoed that, so he compromised on a pair of spectacles left behind by Mrs. Gibble.

"What price me for an M. R. C. V. S.?" he asked proudly as we hurried along.

"F. R. C. S. you mean," I corrected.

"I like the other better. However, look here, you've got to leave it to me when we get there, you know. No poking your oar in. Now then, don't glare at me; ring the bell and look grave."

I tore the bell out by the roots, and stood silently beside the quondam doctor, with very few hopes for the successful result of his mission.

Pectora opened the door herself.

"Oh, you've arrived at last! But who is this gentleman?" she demanded in a cold voice.

Before I had time to introduce him, Hawk, impelled by his hideous failing for romantic situations, raised his hat—my hat—and spoke, to my intense horror, in broken English. There he stood, bowing, grinning, and goggling, and spluttered a dialect that nobody other than a Scotch comedian would attempt.

"Bermit me, young madam," he said. "My vriend here dells me that his oncle has illnesses, so I to oberate have come. My name, it is the Herr Doctor Gesoogenheimer, from Berlin."

At the conclusion of this lunatic speech he resumed his bowing till I positively itched to kick him, the more so as Pectora actually beamed on the scoundrel.

"I'm so glad somebody sensible has come at last," she smiled, and offered him her hand, which the scoundrel, taking advantage of his assumed foreign character, reverently kissed. And she never even objected! If I had ventured to attempt such a familiarity, heaven knows what the result would have been.

We had worked our way into the hall, and could already hear dear Uncle's dulcet tones ascending in a plaint to the high heavens, interspersed with many strange and quaint turns of exclamation. Pectora went up to acquaint him with our arrival, and I took advantage of her absence to remonstrate with Hawk, who smiled fatuously as he gazed dreamily after her.

"What a ripping girl!" he sighed.

"What a ripping ass you are, you mean!" I whispered fiercely. "Call this helping me, by starting mountebank tricks that would disgust a penny gaff audience? Don't be a fool again. If you fail me there'll be an end of my hopes in every direction."

Hawk glared through Mrs. Gibble's spectacles.

"See here, Dobbs, I'm to see you through my own way or not at all. You've got to shut up and do as I tell you, you ungrateful brute! Thank goodness, the girl's prepossessed in my favor, and—— Hst! here she is."

She tripped towards us with a strained look in her eyes.

"He absolutely refuses to see you, Arthur," she said, "but he will see the doctor. So perhaps your friend, Dr. ——"

"Gesoogenheimer," prompted the unblushing Hawk. ——"won't mind coming up," finished Pectora, with a beam upon him.

Hawk bowed, "I vill delighted be to accompany madam," and with a backward glance at me, which led me to nearly foam at the mouth, followed Pectora to the regions above.

Raging inwardly, I paced the hall until stopped by a scratching at the front door. In the hope of finding someone to kick on the doorstep, I opened the door, to admit—the Demon. Obviously he had called to gloat. With this object in view, he withdrew under the hall stand, in order to be as far out of reach as possible, and I was on my knees trying to goad him, by means of an umbrella, into the open, when the sound of my cousin's voice made me turn.

"I'm really surprised at you, Arthur, playing on the floor like a child when father's in such a serious state," she remarked severely.

"I'm trying to reach the dog," I explained.

"Oh, you brought it with you? You are quite inseparable! I am so glad you brought that nice, courtly doctor. His manner is charming. He told me he'd soon put father right, and he's going to stop to lunch."

This was too much.

"He's a precious doctor," I sneered. "Why——"

"That's so like your horrid temper," broke in Pectora; "why, he's the very man who is helping to put right all the trouble you have brought on us. It's really painful to have you grumbling about the house. I do wish you'd go and sit in the garden until we hear the result of the doctor's examination."

She made this remark so pointedly, opening the door at the same time, that I decided to go and spend the time waiting in thinking what to call Hawk. The door closed behind me, and opened again to let the Demon out, who seemed to know what a mess of things he had made, for he kept well out of reach.

I sat in that garden for some time thinking of what I'd like to do to Hawk, and decided to buy a copy of *Foxe's Book of Martyrs*, in case I needed any further hints, until my attention was drawn to the library window, from which Pectora was making imperious signs.

"Father says you are to go away at once," she said firmly. "On no account will he have you bringing your dog into his garden."

She shut the window abruptly before I had time to reply. Bewilderment is a faint and feeble expression to denote my state of mind. I felt broken on the wheel of destiny—destiny being represented by Hawk in my best clothes and Mrs. Gibble's glasses, who was planning some arch game beyond my powers of imagination. I might as well go home. At least Hawk would come back some time or other, and I could wring from him some explanation. My brain positively whirled, and running into the live stock dealer, who stopped me to heatedly inquire about the attempted murder of his maternal ragbag, did not calm me.

"It's a burning shame, that's wot it is," skirled Mr. Gibble after me, and I quite agreed with him.

There was nothing to do but sit down until Hawk thought fit to come in. At last I heard his footsteps on the stairs and ran to meet him.

"Explain yourself," I yelled, hauling him into the room, and dashing Mrs. Gibble's spectacles off his nose. "What in the name of all possessed have you been up to with my Uncle?"

He was pretty sultry.

He shook me off, sank into a chair, and blew noisily.

"Of all the ungrateful chaps!" he said. "You ought to thank your lucky stars you had me here to pull you through. If you'll stop that raving I'll tell you all about it. When your charming cousin took me up to the old boy's room he was pretty sultry. I had about as hard a job as I could manage to prevent roaring out loud. Nunky looked like Uncle Tom doing the little Eva's death scene. His noble face was coal black and his language purple. Wanted to know where the pink hullabaloo you were first, and particularly stated that immediately he was out of bed he'd have you blacked like he was. Well, as I saw he'd have a fit if I didn't stop him, I told him that at least you had gone to the trouble and expense of engaging me to put him right."

"Did you talk to him in that awful dialect?"

"Oh, yes; and he said he'd always heard foreigners were in advance of the English in obscure medicine. I felt his pulse for a dickens of a time whilst I thought of what to do next, and at last a brilliant, a positively brilliant idea came to me. I examined his ebony features, and shook my head severely. 'Can you get it off?' asked the old boy. 'No,' says I——"

"You may cut out what you said in German to him; get on with your tale in plain words," I interjected.

"All right. 'No,' says I, 'because there's nothing to get

off. The cause of your complexion being thus is shock, sir, shock. The effect of jumping out of a warm Turkish bath into the cold air has rendered' (here I brought in a few medical terms, feeling safe that he, as a patent medicine joker, wouldn't know if they were right or not) 'the solar plexus susceptible to the oscillations of the diaphragm, if you follow me?' He began to look a bit worried. 'Is it serious?' he asked anxiously. 'It would have been fatal if I hadn't been called in. As it is, I fear that the impregnation of the terra incognita by the convolutions of the mastoid has set up a highly infectious condition.' That fetched him. 'Who'd ha' thought it! Shall I recover?' asks Nunky in a fearful stew. 'If you will leave everything to me,' I said gravely. 'I will, I will,' he groaned. So the next thing I did, Dobbs, was to go to the 'phone."

"What for?"

"To ring the hospital up."

"Ring the hospital up?" I asked in bewilderment.

"Yes," he replied in a fat, satisfied voice, "I rang 'em up to send the ambulance at once. You see, half measures were no good; I'd simply *got* to help you out, and the only way was to get Uncle safely stowed till he got cooled down. I explained to the hospital it was a bad case of scarlet fever, so they sent the ambulance quickly. I packed the old boy in comfy, and he's there by now."

"You ape! You son of an everlasting line of maniacs! What induced you to do that? They're bound to find out there's nothing wrong with him but a black face, and he'll be savager than ever—absolutely raving."

Hawk pretended to look injured.

"If he was free to get about he'd have given you a warm time, eh? Then the only thing was to prevent him getting about, what? That I did, and now you object. Upon my soul, you are a chap, Dobbs, a perfect bounder."

"But didn't he kick up a row at being sent off like that?"

"Well, he didn't like the idea at first, because he said on principle he'd never mixed up with hospitals, being kind of in

opposition; and wanted to know if it couldn't be managed without 'em knowing who he was. I told him I thought it could be done that way——"

"Once started, obstacles are nothing to you," I remarked bitterly.

"Maybe. Anyhow, he liked my scheme sufficiently to hand me a fiver, and so he did go in anonymously. I simply put him down as one Hezekiah Johnson, colored missionary, subject to delusions. That'll take 'em some time to untangle, what?"

I tore my hair and stamped about the room. This came of trusting my affairs to a mad-brained ass like Hawk, whose head was riotous with lunatic plots for sensational penny dreadfuls.

"When they do unravel Uncle's muddle and let him go it will be something awful for me. He'll blame it all on to me, of course," I moaned.

"You bet," chuckled Hawk complacently. "Shouldn't be surprised if he killed you. I should bunk if I were you. Pst! Get! Vanish! Take a prolonged holiday. Let him simmer, Dobbs, old man."

"You would?"

"Rather. He who blacks his uncle and runs away, will live to black another day. I advise you to try other scenes for a bit."

"That's not a bad idea," I said bitingly, "and I'll follow it. How you will get on, you best know. Kidnapping an elderly gentleman, personating a doctor, and thus obtaining a fee under false pretenses, are things you will be congratulated upon on all sides. I know the medical profession like chaps to do it, and Uncle will never rest until he has expressed his thanks to, or rather on, you."

Hawk bounded out of his arm-chair, his fat little body quivering.

"My stars!" he screamed. "I never thought of that. I wish I'd left your infernal affairs alone. Pretty fine thing for me, this is, blessed if it isn't."

"You're right, my boy. It'll put all your sensational writing in the shade when they do catch you. Look well on the placards. 'Hack Writer Poses as Doctor, and Kidnaps Wealthy Manufacturer!'"

"Oh, shut up! You blacked him first, you know. We're pretty well in the same boat. Let's join forces and flit together."

"Needs must," I assented wearily.

Hawk was at once the energetic novelist, working out the flight of a character beset.

"Right. We'll reckon it'll be an hour before he's discovered to be physically well; two more hours for explaining how a balmy negro happens to be a local magnate; another hour to verify it. Roughly, before the fun begins we've got four clear hours. One will serve to put a few things together and three to get clear of the town."

As his own luggage consisted of a small handbag, I concluded the things he referred to meant mine. They did. He helped me pack in a mad way of his own.

"Put on as many clothes as you can, saves carrying," he puffed, struggling into two of my coats, "and fill your pockets with any oddments you want. Have you much money?"

I produced my wealth, which he took and calmly pocketed.

"Better let one of us do the paying, saves bother," he explained.

At this point the Demon wandered into the room and sat down to watch us. I'd forgotten him for the moment, and drew Hawk's attention to the pup.

"Oh, bring him along! Let him share our miseries. Besides, it will be best to leave no clue."

At last we were ready. Hawk's natural *embonpoint* was not improved by two overcoats wrapped round it, nor was the hairbrush I carried in my tailcoat pocket comfortable; but we had no time to think of trifles.

"We'll cut across the fields to the junction and put them

off the track, as they're sure to inquire at Middewick Station first," blew Hawk, as I locked the house up.

On the door I pinned a card, inscribed—

"*Gone to France on urgent business,*"

and noticed with an uneasy feeling that directly we moved off Mr. Gibble darted from his cave across the road, to spell it out with the aid of a dirty and distrustful finger.

We dodged round a corner, and came to a stile which gave on a footpath leading across the fields. The Demon slipped through, I climbed over, and the ever-dramatic Hawk, a ridiculous little figure, shook his clenched fist at the sleepy town, muttered "Curse ye, foiled!" and vaulted over, landing gracefully on the Demon. The latter set up a delirious yelping, to the tune of which I assisted the recumbent Hawk on to his legs.

Flight.

Looking ahead, we then simultaneously sighted Pectora coming along the path towards us.

CHAPTER IV

Which describes our flight, and an unexpected meeting with my cousin. The dog catches a wasp at the crucial moment, and assists Hawk to have a fit, which gets rid of my relative and enables us to proceed. A cross-country run with a few checks brings us to the station, where we overhear a conversation, which causes us to hide under a carriage seat to avoid Harker who, however, chooses our carriage, as does the dog.

THE path was long, winding and flower-sprinkled, a most charming path in every way, and Pectora was yet a good hundred yards from us; but the obvious fact remained that unless we scuttled over the stile again into the town we should have to meet her, and it occurred to me that after recent events our flight might require considerable explanation

"The Dickens is in this blessed affair!" I exclaimed to Hawk, whose appearance was not improved by a miscellaneous collection of dust and grass on his back.

"We'll see it through. You play up to me. By the way, what did I call myself? Doctor who?" said Hawk, adopting an easy air which made him look a particularly evil anarchist.

"Some German name," I replied testily, keeping an eye on Pectora, who, as she was reading, had not yet noticed us.

"German be blowed! It was Irish. I distinctly remember saying 'Begorrah' several times," he rejoined.

"I'll say something stronger than that in a minute if you don't pull yourself together. You gave a ghastly imitation of a stage German. An Irishman wouldn't play such silly foreign tricks as to kiss a girl's hand like you did."

"Wouldn't he?" asked Hawk in a reminiscent tone. "Well, perhaps I am wrong. Yes, now I come to think of it, I was Scotch. I remember when Nunky was talking about you I said, 'Hoots, mon, dinna haver so.' Jove! she's getting nearer. I must think quick."

I was at a complete loss, and decided to leave him to explain things, so I dropped behind on the pretense of fondling the Demon, who, thinking I meant mischief, withdrew growling.

Pectora was quite close by then, and Hawk, raising his hat floridly, went up to her, lost his head completely, and addressed the astonished girl in this way—

"Weel, weel, an' wha'd ha' thocht av matin' yez the noo, me darlint—beg pardon, meant Miss Boscobel. Losh! but it's deloighted t' see ye Oi am entoirly, an' it's the glad day for me t' be danderin' doon the burn with yez, indade. Oh, hang it——" he trailed off in confused silence.

"Why Doctor Gesoogenheimer," exclaimed Pectora, "I am surprised to meet you! Where are you going? I thought you said you would go to the hospital with father; and fancy going off so quickly without saying good-by, and letting me thank you."

It looked to me the good Hawk had got himself a little involved on his own account, and he wasn't improving matters by gaping fishily at my cousin.

"And Arthur, too," went on Pectora. "What are you doing in the fields, I wonder?"

This suddenly set Hawk off again.

"That's it, dear lady," he rambled, "we came—kommed, I mean—to pick daisies, you know. Lovely flowers, what?"

"Daisies?" she asked, with raised eyebrows.

"Yes. For a wreath, you know. Varra appropriate, hein?"

I saw he had completely lost himself, so I broke in

"You see, Pectora, the doctor was so upset at seeing poor Uncle this morning, he's had a kind of stroke, and I'm taking him for a gentle walk. He often suffers like this, and picking daisies seems to sooth him."

"Really!" said she, eyeing Hawk, who certainly looked as if he was a paralytic in the last stage of lunacy. "I am so sorry. Won't he come up to the house and lie down for a little?"

I jumped at this opening.

"Just the thing. I'll bring him along shortly. He'll be much better when he's picked a few flowers."

I was blindly groping for a way to get rid of her. Time was getting on, and every moment brought my rampant Uncle's release nearer.

"That's right," she said kindly. "I'll come with you if you won't be long."

"Great snakes!" I gasped to myself, "shall we ever get away?"

Hawk was standing with a fatuous simper on his heated face, rubbing the fur of his top hat the wrong way. Would nothing happen?

Something did. The Demon had it seemed fallen foul of a wasp, and was desirous of advising the world of his annoyance thereat. He began operations with a wild howl and a leap which knocked Hawk sprawling, and then marathoned into the distance. Pectora happened to be looking the other way, and did not notice the cause of Hawk's fall, so I made a final effort.

"Oh, dear!" I shouted, rushing to my prostrate friend, "he's fallen down in a fit. (Lie still, you fool, and groan; roll your eyes too.) I've seen him before like this, Pectora, and he's always dangerous. Leave us before he starts struggling!"

At this point in my excitement I accidentally trod on one of his ears, causing him to give a terrific yell and plunge. Happily this was more than my cousin could stand.

"Be gentle with him, Arthur, and I'll run home and get the spare room ready for the poor man."

Then she went, and directly she was out of sight Hawk arose choking with wrath.

"You've made her think I'm a kind of serious madman," he hissed.

"Rather. She'll think twice about letting you make up to her again, that is if you get out of jail before she is an old woman."

He spluttered for a second or two, and then lashed out at me in a rage.

"You luckless puppy," fumed he; "after my kindness too. I'm going to give you the soundest thrashing you ever had."

Like a tub he rolled himself at me, and locked in a savage embrace, we fell to the ground. Somehow Hawk got me under, and with a wild gleam in his eye was just going to plant his fist in mine, when an approving voice behind us remarked in husky tones——

"That's it, guvnor, paste 'im one!"

Hawk scrambled up, and so did I, to see who our audience was, and were met by the view of Mr. Gibble, who rubbed his hands joyfully, then wagged a dirty forefinger at me.

"'Opping it, was yer, Mr. Dobbs? Doin' the slope, hey?" Thinks you, I'll set my bloomin' dorg on a pore, inoffensless ole lady, an' slide orf afore she can get lawful compersation, eh? Oh, no! Little Georgy's goin' to 'ave 'is rights, 'e is," said Mr. Gibble banteringly. "'E's goin' to collect them damages in person, Mr. Dobbs, and I calls the other gent to witness of em, the 'ole truth and nothin' but it," he finished with legal unction, and took his coat off.

"You're a fool!" snapped Hawk, glancing at his watch. "If Mr. Dobbs's dog happened to frighten your mother, he will compensate her in due course; but he won't be intimidated by a bully. We're in a hurry, so clear out before we wipe the path with you."

"Wot? You wipe the path with me? Why, you insnifigant little 'ound, I'd kill you with a look. *And* your bloomin' dorg to. You and the dorg," he snorted scornfully.

Now the Demon in his flight had transferred the wasp from his coat to his mouth, where it was speedily getting to work in the stinging way, so that the unfortunate dog, who for some time had been madly circling the field, became absolutely frenzied. In some way his circles had drawn in, and just as the challenge left the live stock dealer's lips he came in the Demon's line of flight.

Catching Mr. Gibble full in the waistcoat, the Demon took him in his stride, and he collapsed. A gross man, this knocked every puff of breath out of him. He lay inert. The shock of the Demon on top of the shock to his prowess had placed him *hors de combat.* We stood regarding him.

Hawk snorted grimly—

"We're getting on. Looks as though he'd broken his neck. At this rate half Middewick will be thirsting for our blood."

"Come on, don't chatter. Uncle will be out in another two hours or so. Run if you can," I urged, making a splurging start.

Blowing and panting, tripping and gasping, we wearily dragged across field after field. A playful bull detained us for some ten minutes in one of them, and was only appeased by Hawk leaving his hat (my best topper) as a souvenir; and when we did get to the junction, we were at our last stagger. Whilst Hawk fussed at the ticket-office, I wandered on to the platform, and sank on a seat under the Stationmaster's office window, and endeavored to bring my shattered mind to bear on the situation we were in.

Twenty-four hours ago I was a happy if useless inventor, with prospects from a wealthy avuncular relative. Now I was a scurrier on the face of the earth, whilst my Uncle, so far as I could gather, was masquerading as an Ethiopian of unstable mind. True, the dog Pectora had planted on me began the trouble, but it was without doubt Hawk who had brought matters to the boil. If it had not been for his bouncing a night's lodging out of me, and so mixing up in things, everything would have smoothed down, and a little pumice stone and sandpaper would have got Uncle's complexion off. I began to understand why, when pilfering errand boys came before the bench, they blamed their wickedness on to the reading of cheap literature, for here was a strong case in point, the writing of "thunder" tales had reacted on Hawk. He was so impregnated with violent ideas, he could not live without giving them expression; and it seemed to me if I had much more Hawk I could not live at

all. Behind us lay a gory path of victims—maimed police, senseless live stock purveyors, hospital patients, and beldams who chewed tobacco and gibbered of the law's terrors.

Before us it didn't do to look. All things were possible, and with a dominating ass to direct our fortunes it was odds but we should quickly attain the celebrity of the illustrated police papers. However, at all events, I might hope for an hour or two's respite.

"And, Mr. 'Umbin, as I was sayin', they then threw me over them banisters," came a voice from the Stationmaster's room.

I pricked up my ears. Was this a coincidence, or was it the local policeman we had dealt with? My doubts were set at rest when another voice answered—

"'Lor, Mr. Harker, did they? I hope—I mean I suppose they 'urt you?"

"Yes," went on the first speaker, whose voice I recognized as Harker's, "not arf they didn't. And the wust of it wos the Inspector told me I wos to blame for not collarin' them burglars. 'Course, I knoo they was all my eye; but Dobbs an' 'is friend looked like makin' me look a fool if I says there wasn't no burglars, and there it was. I tell you, I felt a bit upset when the Inspector orders me to trace them burglars wot don't exist or be reprimanded."

"Hard on you, I must say," remarked the Stationmaster in sorrowful and sympathetic tones, rather spoilt by an underlying chuckle.

"But," continued Harker, "I got an idea, mind ye. I'm seeposed to make an arrest, am I? And there warn't no burglars. Yet if I admits I simply got hustled by Dobbs an' Co. my tale of a desprit encounter with four armed saviges will look a bit silly, see? So what I'm agoin' to do is to arrest this Dobbs an' his friend on suspicion of harborin' dangerous criminals d'rectly I can get a warrant. They've said as the fellers was there. Very well, let 'em prove what they wos there for. Good, aint it?"

Here was something else cropping up to stay our journey

with a vengeance. Without doubt, if Harker saw us, despite not having a warrant, he would act at once, and I can see the sort of joyful scrimmage Hawk would make of the arrest. Ten to one he would throw Harker on the line in front of a train and then throttle the Stationmaster to round the business off; for his notion of quietly getting out of an unpleasant position always seemed to demand at least one violent assault, and I had no fancy for being charged as his accessory.

And here came Hawk with the tickets, whistling pot-valiantly, throwing superb glances around as who should say, "Behold a second Napoleon! a champion of the strong arm, and an upholder of 'Up Guards and at 'em' principles." Sighting me, he laughed fatly, and sank on the seat beside me.

"Once aboard the train," he began in rollicking tones, at which I clapped an insistent hand over his mouth.

"Listen, and shut up!" I whispered.

He removed my hand from his classic features, and was just going to raise his voice when Harker began again.

"It'll be a pretty little case," cackled the pride of the Middewick force. "Dobbs's partner is a stranger in the town. Suspicious point that. Then Dobbs is knowed to be an inventor, so wot about bombs? I fancy a remark about Anarchists 'll make the bench look sideways at Dobbs, Mr. 'Umbin, eh? Then I've 'eard that animal dealer Gibble a-grumblin' to-day about assaults. Why," he said indignantly, "it's a dooty to the public to run 'im in, a positive dooty. Very likely when we come to ransack 'is place we shall find any amount of things."

Mr. 'Umbin.

"What things?" queried the Stationmaster.

"Oh, all sorts; skelingtons, p'raps. Howsomever, I'm a-goin' up to Scotland Yard to-day to see if there's any record of 'is friend, to start with."

Hawk looked into my face.

"It's our dear old bobby! Shows a nasty mean spirit after that tip, don't it? Well, he's not going to catch this child."

"But he'll spot us getting into or out of the train," I said anxiously.

Hawk pointed to a train which had been standing in the station for some time.

"There's our train, my boy! What we'd better do is to get in now and hide under the seat until she starts. He'll never dream we're on the way to London if he doesn't see us get in, and we can easily dodge into the crowd at the terminus before he spots us."

"I don't fancy getting under carriage seats," I complained.

But a movement in the Stationmaster's room as Harker lumbered to his feet made me sink personal longings for comfort in the important necessity of seeking cover. Hawk scurried off, a remarkable little object. Anything more unlike the popular idea of an author it would be hard to find. He was enveloped in two overcoats, which, belonging to me, fitted him skirtily, only a flash of plaid trouser indicated that he was not a little fat, elderly female. A hat of the sort known as Deerstalker, bought to replace my topper detained by the bull, and bought too without the pettifogging detail of size, obscured his head and most of his face. He wore patent-leather boots, which gave an air of smartness to an otherwise crude appearance, and the legs of a pair of pink silk pajamas dangled rakishly from one pocket, a comb and tooth-brush perkily keeking out of the other.

I followed warily, wondering how on earth, garbed as he was, he hoped to escape notice, and thanked goodness I at least was not so conspicuous. A passing glance in the mirror on an automatic machine, however, rather daunted me, for it appeared that in my run across country I had garnered many things, including some well-mashed toadstoals on my back, to replace which, on the principle of give and take, I had left the best part of a coat tail behind. My collar had broken loose from the detaining stud at the back of my neck, and rode easily up and down. A bramble-scratched face and a rapidly-growing lump on the forehead further detracted from a well-groomed look. It occurred to me Hawk and I

would make fine substitutes for some of the Salvation Army's Darkest England recruits, and it was a great relief to notice Hawk, after a careful look round, open a carriage door and climb in. Hastily following, I was in time to see the flash of a trousered leg as he dived under the seat.

"Duck, you fool! there's someone coming," he muttered.

So with one last look at the sun, I scrambled under the other seat and lay in a collection of dust which must have been the accumulations of old coaching days, carefully preserved and brought up to date and laid down for my especial benefit.

We both lay facing the door, foolishly left open in our scurry, and by twisting my neck to the point of dislocation, and laying one ear in the dust, I could catch a glimpse of a perspective of platform considerably spoilt by the nearing figures of Harker and the Stationmaster.

My involuntary exclamation of dismay found no response. Hawk was calmly sleeping—another proof of his utter depravity.

I knew perfectly well that Harker would choose our carriage. It was the worst thing that could happen, so it was bound to occur. It did. He reached the door chattering volubly, and depositing a carpet bag directly over my head, clambered in after it.

"Well, Mr. 'Arker," said the Stationmaster, who was idly pulling the window up and down, "for your sake, I 'ope you'll catch those owdacious chaps. We want something to liven us up in the way of a law case. Why, we 'avent 'ad one since the school children pushed you in the canal."

Harker gave an indignant snort at this remark, and hastily strove to change the subject.

"When do this train start?" he demanded.

Mr. 'Umbin made a rapid calculation, and replied—

"If the express comes through to 'er time, and the 2.5 for Middewick gets shunted round to number three, and the guard gets back from 'is dinner all right, she'll be off inside ten minutes."

"I've got a proper thirst. Should I 'ave time?" queried Harker anxiously.

"Depends 'ow much you want to quench it. I never saw you do any good to that thirst of yours under a quart," said the Stationmaster.

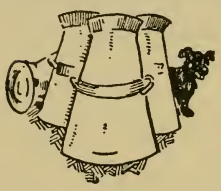
"I'll chance it," decided Harker, who got out and ambled hurriedly down the platform.

The Stationmaster trailed after him, and once more we were alone. Would he miss the train after all? If it started in ten minutes punctually there was a chance. I screwed down in the dust again and kept a feverish eye on the stretch of platform, deserted now save for some milk-cans. To my excited imagination they had a sinister look, and every minute I expected to see something come from behind them to our further discomfort. Three of the possible ten minutes had flown.

CHAPTER V

Shows how Harker meant mischief, and the obliquity of the dog nearly shows us up. Harker has a brilliant idea, and so does Hawk. The law and the lunatic. Hawk as Mad Willie and Harker as a canary. Hawk's victory, and Harker's vanishing. We reach London.

ABSOLUTE quiet reigned in our carriage until a snore from Hawk broke the silence. I looked away from the milk-cans for a second, and noticed he lay on his back, two inches deep in fluff, and slept like a British navvy on a road-mending contract. When I turned my gaze to the cans again I saw the Demon sliding round the corner of them, tired but eager, and obviously thirsting for the companionship of his devoted master. It did not take him long to reach our open door, and with a gleeful snuffle to jump in. He had the sense to keep out of my reach, and busied himself making a comfortable nest on the seat farthest away from the platform. He had found me, and that sufficed him. All he wanted was to be on the spot so as to miss nothing of the show when I next got into other people's troubles. As Harker was not yet in sight, I ventured a stealthy hand towards my slumbering fellow runaway, and tweaked his nose violently.



Hawk awoke with a start, striking his head on the seat above him.

"I shall speak to the captain about these scandalously low bunks!" he said wrathfully.

"Wake up; you're under a carriage seat, and Harker will be here again in a minute," I warned him.

He was at once the alert criminal, and while I informed him of what had taken place during his snooze, matured a plan.

"Don't worry," he said cheerfully; "we'll wait till the train starts, and chuck him out of the window. That will be soon settled."

"Once and for all, I won't be party to any more of your knockabout antics, Hawk," I said sternly, with my one available eye on the platform. "As it is, you have dragged me low enough without further madness. What about the dog? If we turn him out they'll spot him, and conclude we're here."

"Get him under the seat then. Here! Pstt! Good pup, coom along," said Hawk persuasively; and I joined in with a heated whisper, "Cats! Pstt! Rats! Find 'em! Seek 'em out!"

Although the Demon had remained unmoved by Hawk's blandishments, he responded to my invitation to seek 'em out by leaping from the seat and squirming under it. He then began worrying my remaining coat tail, the one which held the hair-brush; but at least he was hidden, and with his mouth thus occupied could not make much noise.

To my intense relief the engine now gave a preliminary snort, and backed restively. The train was about to start, and Harker, still quenching that prize thirst of his, would be left behind. The strain of watching had made my eye water, so that I was forced to close it for a moment, and in that moment my undustchoked ear caught the ramping clatter of regulation boots.

"Here comes old cockalorum," grunted Hawk in a commonplace tone, as though he were rather pleased than otherwise.

A shrill whistle from the engine, and another backward plunge, followed by a forward movement, told me the train was actually starting, and I almost dared to think we were safe, when with a horrible spurt Harker caught the swinging carriage door, sprawled in, and slammed it after him. He soused down, blowing hard, and imagining himself to be alone, soliloquized.

"Caught 'un," he remarked happily. "Thought the blarmed thing 'd go without me. That ale were very tasty.

Wish I'd 'ad more time. Can't get the flavor to rights till the fourth glass; leastways, not the properest. Now I'll 'ave a nap, so's to turn up at the Yard nice an' fresh. If I brings this case off I can see promotion. I've always 'ad my eye on 'im since I took some of 'is uncle's cough-drops. Mystery runs in families. Ullo! Ullo!" he broke off, catching sight of the Demon coming from under the seat with my hair-brush in his mouth.

"Wot 'ave we 'ere?" asked Harker thoughtfully, "Oos little Teddy Bear are you? This is the latest, pups traveling

"Wot 'ave we 'ere."

by theirselves, 'air-brush and all. Come 'ere, my little feller, and tell Mr. 'Arker all about it." He laid an enormous hand on the Demon and lifted him on to the seat. "Nice 'air-brush, silver monograph and all. D. A. or A. D. is it? A. D. would stand for A Dog, so it would," he chortled. "I seem to 'ave seen you somewheres before. Where was it? Why last night, of course. On the doorstep you was. Must belong to Dobbs. That's it, Arthur Dobbs that A. D. stands for! Lor', if you

could only speak an' say where your master be! But," went on Harker, an idea slowly germinating in his bucolic mind, "if you're in the train no doubt 'e is too. And 'is pal. Now I wonder if there's a communication cord 'ere? If there is I'll stop the train in the name of the Lor, and rout un out."

He slowly walked across the carriage and hung out of the window to see if, as he hoped, there was any means of carrying out his intention. Harker was a large man, as I have explained, whom a habit of always taking three helpings of every dish that came his way had made extremely wide; hence whilst it was fairly easy to squeeze the upper part of his body through the open window, it would be another and lengthy matter to struggle back again.

During Harker's ruminations Hawk had been making a series of the most extraordinary signals to me. What he meant by screwing one eye up, and opening and shutting his hand convulsively, then wrinkling his nose and squinting whilst he clutched at his throat, escaped me, unless he desired to express his envy of Harker's recent quenching operations.

Directly the policeman's back was turned my friend crept from under the seat, and with a well-planted kick urged me to rise too; but I wasn't going to be drawn into taking pot shots at telegraph posts with policeman ammunition if I knew it, and intimated this to Hawk.

"Won't help, you bounder?" he whispered. "Very well, you lie there and leave it to me. I'll show you what a little common sense will do, old chap. I'm going to trust to the fact that Harker won't recognize me, for he only saw me in my nightie, as it were, and if I don't give him a shaking up, never call me a writer of fiction again."

"You may play what fool games you like as long as you don't drag me into it. Here I am and here I stop, and I'm getting quite used to the dust."

"Right. You just fancy it's all settled and have a sleep. I'll fix this Johnny all right," he murmured, sitting down in Harker's seat with an insane grin on his face.

"There ain't no cord there," said Harker, carefully back-

ing into the carriage again. "So I'll try the tother side. Good 'Eavens!" he gasped, catching sight of the figure of Hawk, in all its panoply a weird figure indeed, especially after some time under a railway seat. "Where did you come from? It ain't that ale, is it? I thought I noticed a funny taste, too. Now I wonder if you be a man or a feller in the pink rat line? Where did you come from? Blessed if I touch anything stronger than lemonade if this is wot 'appens."

As he spoke he was cautiously approaching the silent Hawk, when that genius let off a hideous cackling laugh.

"Don't do that, mister," pleaded Harker, who retreated in disorder. "Give a civil answer to a civil question. Who are you?"

"Mad Willie," replied Hawk, with another comforting screech.

"Eh?" demanded Harker in a shrill voice.

"Mad Willie, they call me," replied Hawk, and began sidling along the seat, enlivening his progress with a few choice catawauls.

My sense of humor suddenly got the better of me, and but for a pound of dust entering my mouth as I opened it to guffaw, I should have roared aloud at Hawk's new scheme to pretend a madness he had as yet not quite arrived at. I spent the next minute trying to choke softly, and realizing what numerous flavors dust possessed.

All this while Harker was looking piteously about for some means of escape. Hawk sidled nearer and nearer, warming to his work as he saw the policeman didn't recognize him.

"Come and play with poor Willie," he said ingratiatingly.

"Certainly not," stammered Harker. "I'm seeprised at you asking such a thing. They ought to be ashamed of theirselves letting you out, they did."

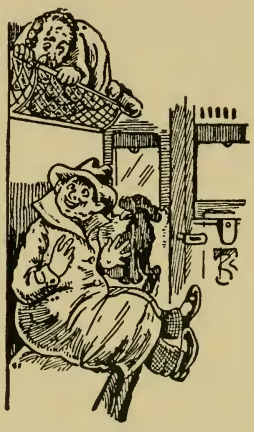
"Come and play with Willie," yelled Hawk explosively, and burst into another howl.

"Oh, dear!" ejaculated Harker. "This is all right, being shut up with a loony. Wish he was back in his padded room.

Where did I read they was as strong as four men, when upset?"

"There's a monkey crawling up your back," exclaimed Hawk pleasantly, at which Harker made a frantic jump on to the seat.

"He's goin' to 'ave an attack, I know 'e is. P'raps, though, 'e ain't a dangerous one," he muttered. "Only playful. 'Ere, Willie," he stammered, "wot did they put you in the nice big comfy 'ouse for, eh?"



Mad Willie.

"Willie broke a policeman's neck because he wouldn't play with him," babbled Hawk. "Willie loves policemen if they'll play with him."

A shuddering groan burst from Harker as he wildly leaped for the rack, into which he struggled painfully.

Hawk looked up with a grin and clapped his hands.

"That's nice, you're goin' to play then. What game is it?"

Harker's eyes rolled wildly as he endeavored to think. Such a position and what to do in it he had never dreamed of. At last he managed to say—

"We'll play pets, shall we? I'm in a cage, see?"

"What a pretty game," giggled Hawk. "You're a dicky bird, are you?"

"Yes, a pretty little canary a-warblin' in 'is golden cage," panted Harker. The strain on his inventive faculties was awful. "A—a bird, Willie," he warned, "wot mustn't be touched on no account, for fear of spoilin' his lovely feathers."

I could imagine Hawk to be enjoying himself intensely. I will say this for him, he never assaulted anyone who crossed his path if there were an easier way of removing them. In the present instance he seemed to think mental torture would

effect his purpose if he only kept the interest up, so licking anticipatory lips, he said—

"Nice bird. Now Willie will be a pussy cat."

"What for?" asked Harker with much concern; and as he noticed Hawk was realistically imitating a cat preparing a leap for a birdcage, he hurriedly added, "'Ere, don't let's play this game any more. It's silly. Let's play somethin' else."

"All right, we'll play menageries," acquiesced the pseudo Willie.

"Certainly, sir," breathed the wretched man. "I'll be wot?"

"You shall be a piece of meat, an' I'll be a roaring lion," said Hawk definitely. "We'll have a game it's feedin' time, shall we?"

We were approaching a station, and Harker fervidly muttered—

"If on'y I can keep him playin' about till I can get away, I don't care wot 'appens about Dobbs. I'll go 'ome by the next train and take to my bed permanent. I can feel myself a-goin' gray," whilst he flogged his brain for some way of prevaricating. "I think that's a silly game too, Willie. I tell you wot," he hurried on, with a feverish attempt at enthusiasm, "let's play 'ide and seek, shall we?"

"How?" asked Willie, who was prowling up and down the narrow passage between the seats in his latest character of a hungry lion. How he kept a straight face was more than I could understand.

"Why," explained Harker, "you cover your eyes up, an' I'll 'ide, see? Then when I call out, you must look for me, and call 'Peep-bo!' when you see me. (To think as I've come to playin' Peep-bo with a dangerous madman!) Then you ide,' Willie. Ain't that a nice game?"

The poor fellow's ghastly smile was almost hidden by the streams of perspiration which poured down his face.

He nervously watched Hawk, after a rapid prance or so, hide his face under the updrawn tail of one of his coats, and

then, talking the while, with the greatest care Harker lowered himself from the rack just as the train started slowing up.

"Keep your eyes tight shut, Willie, and we will 'ave a lark. I'm a-goin' to 'ide myself so as you'll 'ave reason to be proud if you find me (I'll see you don't)," panted the moist policeman as he tiptoed from the seat to the floor, incidentally treading on the Demon's tail.

That lovable dog had been watching Hawk with a critical eye, approvingly adding his own yelps to the other's weird howls, and during the less noisy periods listening with one ear cocked, looking the while from bait to baiter. He was perfectly aware of my proximity, for I noted his watchful glance sometimes swept over me, with an exultant gleam as he observed my dusty and groveling position.

When he received the full benefit of a genuine policeman's large-sized eleven on his caudal appendage he gave vent to such a weird yow-row that Hawk's loudest attempts seemed, in comparison, like the crooning of an Eastern love song, then bolted under the opposite seat, where he remained whining dismally.

"Don't look up, Willie," implored Harker, whom the Demon's vocalization had further disorganized. "Don't look up or I shan't play, and I know 'ow disappointed you'd be then. (Bust this door 'andle! Why the dooce don't they oil 'em? Lazy, 'ulkin' fellers, them porters. Ah! 'ere's the platform, and thank 'eaven the 'andle's movin' at last!)"

With the utmost delicacy he gently pushed the door wide open, and with a parting, "*Now* you may look, Willie, dash your eyes!" flung himself out of the carriage, smashed the door to with a fearful bang, and tore down the platform like a Derby winner. Hawk, with his face working convulsively, hung out of the window to give him a parting cheer, and I dragged myself stiffly from under the seat in time to see the unnerved worthy plunge past an astonished ticket collector, cavort down the station lane, and finally disappear through the swing doors of a sheltering public-house.

"That's the way to frolic with them," said Hawk. "He

won't trouble us again, I'll guarantee. I fancy my acting was pretty realistic."

"Second nature, I expect," I replied sarcastically, as I endeavored to remove a layer or so of carriage moss from my noble person. "What, by the way, are we going to do when we get to London? After the restfulness of the last few hours it will be too slow for us; besides, if we go to your rooms——"

"Not if I know it, with that female landlady of mine casting sheeps' eyes at me till I shudder," interjected Hawk.

"Well then, where are we going? Perhaps you are thinking of getting a position in the Chamber of Horrors at Madame Tussaud's? They'd welcome you with open arms, Hawk, I don't doubt."

"My idea was that we should get rigged out to make ourselves presentable, get rid of these filthy rags, and have a week or so by the sea till the affair has blown over. It'll do us both good, and the dog too."

I objected to Hawk calling the clothes he had commandeered filthy rags, so I scorned his scheme.

"Much better try the Chamber of Horrors, and I'll go and drown myself," I snorted.

"You'll feel better when you've had some grub. All you need do is to leave everything to me. I'm going to see you through this trouble of yours right to the end, my boy."

"That is true; it will be trouble right to the end, and no mistake."

"Oh, dry up! Yank that pup out and brush me down. We shall be at Waterloo in a minute or so, and I'm dying for a feed," he urged.

We set to in a gathering cloud of dust and microbes cleaning each other in intention, but rubbing the mixture in actually.

The train drew up at the far end of the longest platform it could find, where Hawk and I, with the Demon in Harker's carpet bag ("Spoils of war," Hawk had remarked), alighted, and rapidly sought the refreshment-room.

"And now," mumbled Hawk, with his mouth full of

sausage roll, "we'll find somewhere to get a square meal, and then get some clothes, eh?"

We walked out of the station, turning Elephant and Castlewards. The noise of the traffic was perfectly soothing after the racket Hawk had been making as Mad Willie, the grinding of the motor buses and trams were to me quite a lullaby; indeed, I was nearly asleep when Hawk at last led the way into a restaurant, shouting his requirements before he had passed the cashier's desk.

"We'll take things in the order of their importance: Grub first, clothes next, and so on. Waiter! Bring me a couple of pounds of steak and a few bottles of Bass! This gentleman will order for himself."

"I'll have the same," added I.

"And you can get some oysters ready for me whilst this is cooking," called Hawk.

"Yes, sir," floated back to us in an awe-struck voice.

"Nothing like a little snack," remarked Hawk, as he munched a roll whilst his order was being attended to. "In half an hour you'll be blessing me for getting you out of it so well, without undue fuss, old man."

CHAPTER VI

Deals with the question of new clothes and the disposal of the old. The Thames and the tramp. The dog saves us from an awkward predicament, and is rewarded with Banburys, which do not suit him. We walk to Charing Cross to journey to Hastings. Hawk's short cut, and the missed train.

"And now for some togs," said Hawk, full of steak and optimism, as we left the restaurant. "No need to fear being followed now. Middewick won't think of looking for us up here, Dobbs. Eowch!" he jerked out, as someone rushed up behind him and laid a hand on his shoulder.

"You left your bag behind, sir," came the respectful voice of our late waiter, producing Harker's carpet bag, as he spoke, the sundry bulges in the sides of it denoting the Demon's whereabouts.

"Th—thank you," said Hawk shakily, and when the waiter had vanished, turned to me and added, "It's our familiar again. Bothered if I didn't think we were caught. Come on; let's get these clothes replaced, and cheer ourselves up a bit."

He led the way into a large shop, magnificently disdaining the shopwalker's offer to show us the way, and for a start got into the wrong department, greatly shocking a young lady at the baby outfitting counter by a demand for a flannel suit with no lining to the trousers.

In a short time, having found what we required, we emerged dressed in gray suits with straw hats bearing a red, yellow and black ribbon—"My old regimental colors," Hawk had most unnecessarily told the shopman—and with our discarded clothes in Harker's bag, which I carried, whilst Hawk flaunted along with a new Gladstone of vivid brown, containing other purchases.

In a burst of generosity Hawk had bought for the Demon

a pet dog coat of blue, trimmed with a shade of yellow that brought on ophthalmia every time you looked at it. The unhappy animal's whole attention seemed to be concentrated on chewing it off, and on a hot evening one could sympathize with him being tied up in a heavy blanket arrangement specially made for arctic weather.

"Wonder how Nunky is?" mused Hawk. "Never mind, I dare say he'll get over it all right. Let's forget your troubles for a bit. I'm going to show you what a real good time is like, so we'll get rid of this carpet bag and then pop down to Hastings for a little ozone, what?"

We were walking towards Westminster Bridge, and save for that bag, I flattered myself we looked very smart, although Hawk's idea of a flannel suit required a decided pattern—one which would look less noticeable behind the footlights than in the street. The misanthropic Demon pattered in a subdued manner after us.

We walked towards Westminster.

Several men in highly-glazed top hats with curly, rakish brims, and others in soft headgear and more or less shaven faces, nodded fraternally as we passed the end of Kennington Road, and outside the Canterbury Music Hall a pair of golden-haired ladies nudged each other, one remarking that when there were so many crosstalk turns knocking about what chance had simple song and dance artists got, dear, she'd like to know.

Hawk simpered in a gratified way.

"They're taking us for pros.," he said, cocking his straw hat a little more over his left eye.

"For what?" said I.

"Pros. On the stage, you know. Shouldn't be surprised if we were mistaken for stars," he replied loftily.

"Or thunderbolts," I said softly.

"Oh, you're an ignorant ass! Come on, I want to get this bag out of the way," he said, as he turned down by St. Thomas's Hospital and looked over the Embankment at the river.

"What are you going to do with it?" I queried.

"Chuck it in! You don't imagine I want to drag the thing about for the rest of my life, do you?"

"Won't you be noticed?"

"Nonsense. There's only that old tramp near," he argued, pointing to a quiescent bundle on a seat, "and she's asleep."

It seemed perfectly safe; nobody was taking any interest in us. People scuttled to and fro upon the bridge without a glance in our direction, and a policeman who had passed us a minute before was immersed in his note-book as he sedately tramped along the Embankment.

So Hawk gave the bag a preliminary swing and slung it unto the water, where it sank with a noisy plop. As it hurtled through the air I noticed with horror that the sleeping female had galvanized into life, and with a fiendish eagerness she screamed "Murder!" as the bag entered the river.

"Murder!" she yelled, flinging herself upon Hawk, whom she grabbed vindictively by the collar. "'Elp! Murder! Perlice!"

Hawk, I, and the Demon stood aghast, whilst a crowd sprang up like magic. The burly policeman hastily crammed his note-book into his pocket, turned, and descended swiftly, and on the principle of a bird in the hand being worth three on bail, firmly took hold of us.

"Wot's all this?" he asked majestically. "Wot have you been up to, eh?"

The lady devotee of the open road kindly enlightened him.

"I wos a-settin' there," she skirled, pointing a dramatic claw at the top of Big Ben, "an I see these two with a bag a-skulkin' down 'ere; so I ses to meself, I ain't been convicted forty times not to know a crook when I sees one, I ses——"

"Cut it short, old girl," prompted the crowd.

"An' they suddenly up an' flung the pore thing's body in the water!"

"Body?" shouted Hawk. "It was only a bag of old clothes."

"Garn!" derided the crowd. "Bloomin' murderers! Some pore child."

They swayed to and fro with growing excitement.

Another terrific splash at this moment enlivened the proceedings. In a dazed way I became aware that the Demon was missing, and as a moment before he had been standing on the parapet, concluded he had fallen in too.

"The pore thing screamed 'eartrending," remarked the lady tramp, warming to her tale as she noted her appreciative audience. "If there was a man amongst you, you'd resky 'er before it's too late."

Our captor was torn between duty and humanity. If he rescued the alleged drowning person, we might escape; on the other hand, if he held on to us, the person would assuredly drown. He solved the difficulty by giving Hawk into the custody of a zealous cab-driver, who resented sharing his prize with the tramp, albeit she hung on enthusiastically; and myself into the custody of another member of the force, a bland creature, who had strolled up and was murmuring, "Move on, please!" as though he were wound up.

This left Robert No. 1 to do and dare, which he commenced by discarding his helmet and tunic, and posing on the parapet preparatory to diving off. At this juncture the Demon was observed swimming towards the steps with Harker's bag gripped in his jaws, whereat the policeman struggled into his uniform again, and led the whole crowd to await the dog's appearance at the top.

"Hurroo!" yelled the crowd. "The bloomin' dorg's got the bloomin' bag, bloomin' body an' all," and surged riotously.

How they imagined a dog of the Demon's size could drag a full-grown person, encased in a small carpet bag, up the steps I don't know.

More representatives of the law had turned up in time to stay any actual demonstration against us, beyond a few insignificant pieces of stone and an elderly haddock, but it was an impressive procession which saw us to the Kennington Road Police Station.

My heart almost warmed to the Demon as he sturdily took his stand beside us in the little dock, whilst the policeman who had made the arrest stood with Harker's dripping bag in his hand and told his version of the business.

"You've been here before, I think; I seem to know your face," said the Inspector, looking keenly at Hawk. (I wasn't a bit surprised. My only wonder was that Hawk managed to get any liberty at all.) "What's your name?"

"Hawk," snarled my friend.

The inspector's manner changed, and he broke into a smile.

"Why, Mr. Hawk, I expect you can explain this matter satisfactorily. I remember you assisted me greatly in running Flash Joe to earth some time ago."

I mentally apologized to Hawk, for I'd always looked on his tale about Flash Joe as a particularly inartistic bit of romancing.

Hawk too softened, and smiled his recognition.

"I'll explain in a minute, Inspector Brookes. That bag simply contains some old clothes my friend here, Mr. Dobbs, was taking out to give away, and they accidentally fell into the water; then a fool of a tramp interfered, and here we are."

The Inspector, I was delighted to notice, seemed to take Hawk's word readily; and as he had already opened the bag, and verified his statement that its only contents were old clothes, he sternly turned on the luckless P. C. who had brought us, and asked him what he meant by charging people on such flimsy evidence as a tramp's tale. We parted from him with mutual salutations, leaving the constable to sooth his wounded feelings with the wet clothes in Harker's bag.

Hawk voiced a popular feeling as we departed, free men again.

"What we want," he said sententiously, "is a nerve steadier."

He certainly seemed acutely to feel the need of one, for he spoke no word till he had absorbed three, and whilst the barmaid fetched a fourth he took it into his head to praise the Demon.

"I'm going to stand him a feed, Dobbs. He's made up for a lot by retrieving that bag. We should have been very much in queer street if he had not done so; they'd have dragged the river, and kept us locked up on suspicion until it was found.

So he bought the Demon some six of those succulent delicacies known as Banburys, and the Demon wholeheartedly devoured one and all, and then sank, distended and blissful, to sleep them off.

After Hawk had completed a lengthy monologue on his brilliant methods of circumventing trouble, as exemplified in our particular case, we thought it time to move, for the evening was drawing in and we were some distance from Charing Cross, from which station we had decided to leave London.

"It's your jaw, Dobbs; you start talking and don't know when to stop," complained Hawk. "Come along, we shall be late."

"This dog's gone to sleep. Wake up!" I urged the Demon, who lay snoring in Banbury-induced oblivion.

"Yes, wake up," added Hawk, dragging at his collar.

The Demon opened one eye, grunted, and rolled over again.

"Well, we shall have to leave him here, that's all," said Hawk impatiently.

"Can't allow that, sir," suddenly broke in the hostelry's proprietor, who had just appeared, and was looking over the counter at the Demon with a stern, disapproving eye. "Can't have half-drowned pups left here. Take him with you, please."

Hawk looked round at the speaker, noted his determined

face, wilted, and then remarking casually, "Very well, pick him up, Dobbs," fussed out of the door, leaving me to gather up the still wet and supine Demon and stagger after him.

Outside he started talking against time to prevent me from edging in a word about his sharing my burden.

"Hold him a minute whilst I call a cab," he said, when I at last got a word in, and then pranced whistling and gesticulating until a cab came within hail.

"Charing Cross, and look sharp!" he shouted to the driver, who was regarding me and my dripping dog with evident distrust.

"Your friend coming too, sir?"

"Certainly. You can carry more than one passenger without your machine giving way, can't you?" rapped Hawk.

"I can, but I ain't going to. A mud cart's more in your line," sniffed the driver with a final glance at the Demon, and drove off with derisive toots.

"You're a pretty fine prize idiot," I snarled, looking down at my bedaubed suit and the stertorous dog limply dangling in my arms. "Do you expect me to nurse this pup much longer?"

He became indignant.

"Considering what the poor thing has just done for us, the least you can do is to hold him a bit."

"You try for a change."

"What's the use of dirtying two suits? Besides, I want to call a bus," he said, and turned to furiously signal one that was then passing.

Banburys.

"Can't take dogs in that condition, sir," exclaimed the conductor, and rang his bell hastily, managing to get under way before we could board him.

"Bust that beastly dog of yours," growled my companion; "we shall have to walk it then. Good job I know a short cut. You follow me, and we'll be there in a jiffy."

I tried futilely to make the Demon walk, but he only

flopped down on his side grunting; and fearing from certain uneasy whines that those Banburys had not suited him, I carefully picked him up again, trusting fervidly that if I carried him with as little motion as possible his indisposition would remain passive.

There are short cuts and short cuts. Hawk's was one of the others. How a man who had lived in London most of his life could get mixed up like he did astonished me. I have since worked out that short cut on a map. Starting from the Surrey side of Westminster Bridge, it seems but a short walk over it, down the Embankment, and so to Charing Cross. But he had his own ideas of getting there.

"You cut down here," said Hawk over his shoulder, "and in half a tic you come to some steps; and, bless you, you're trotting over the railway bridge before you know it."

It might have been all right if he had taken the right turning. As it turned out, we eventually did arrive at a bridge, but it took us into such a labyrinth of byways I was quite relieved to find after an hour's walk we were not farther afield than the slums of Westminster. On, on trotted Hawk, first to the left, then down a passage and round to the right, full steam ahead through a street composed principally of cabbage stalks and lodging houses, round corners into purple-looking mews for decrepit donkeys; out of these again, and up stall-lined, naphtha-lighted narrow ways, until my arms ached wickedly with the weight of the Demon and a growing desire to punch Hawk's head. Even when we had passed the same fried fish shop six times he wouldn't admit defeat.

"These beastly London improvements," he complained, "are wiping out all the good old landmarks."

I could not see that any of the streets we had passed through had been improved for some fifty years, for they were of the old and crusted variety; so I told him if he'd lost himself he'd better say so, for I emphatically wasn't going to carry a Banbury-stuffed dog about after his Wandering Jew lead all night.

"Lost myself? Rot! Find my way blindfold anywhere in London. Be there in a second. Here's a bridge."

We crossed it, to find we had landed where we started from.

"Better look at a time-table," he said hastily, to stay my remarks.

He led the way into a house of refreshment, and ordered amongst other things an A. B. C., from which we gained the comforting information that every train for Hastings from any station we liked to find had gone, and unless we choose to walk, we should have to wait until the morning.

Hawk began most unjustly to accuse me of keeping him dancing round back streets until we missed the last train.

"That's what comes of letting a silly, countrified ass interfere. If you'd jolly well let me alone, we should have been there hours ago. No, you must keep on grumbling and taking my attention off the turnings. Laziness. Simply because you were too blessed lazy to carry a poor, tired little pup. What a rotter you are, Dobbs," he said acidly.

There was nothing for it but to put up for the night. A kindly hotel keeper permitted the Demon to sleep in the yard on which our bedroom window looked out, and as I lay awake, listening to the myriad sounds of London, so unlike the gentle squeak of the orphan kittens who roamed the attic stairs of my dear old home, it was patent to me that the Banburys had not suited my canine friend.

CHAPTER VII

Explains Hawk's way of waking people. A train at last. Hastings, and a hunt for rooms. The lady of the cod. A stroll and a smuggling yarn, which causes Hawk to approach the Coastguards, and finally effect an arrest himself, for which he is justly rewarded.

DESPITE the Demon's groans, I managed to sleep a little, otherwise I should have been prepared for Hawk's idea of "Wake me early, mother dear!"

There is no doubt about it, the sudden fall of a well-filled Gladstone bag on one's chest, followed by a broncho-busting yell, will bring the heaviest sleep to an abrupt termination.

He need not, as I told him, have waited till he'd had breakfast, and only left a few minutes to catch the train in, before waking me. To rampage into a fellow's bedroom, absolutely enhaloed with ham and eggs, marmalade, toast, and other breakfast joys, and calmly tell him he has only just time to throw his clothes on and rush for some beastly train, partakes of the refinement of cruelty.

Be that as it may, by diligent valeting on Hawk's part, I got dressed, and we caught that train by the skin of our teeth, and shins, when we fell over the Demon. The journey down was uneventful. I smoked and meditated. Hawk snored (horrid habit he had of falling asleep at the least provocation). He said all great men could do it. Look at Wellington, what? The Demon lay under the seat and seriously went into the Banbury question. Hawk's nasal notes and the pup's whines were like a violin and 'cello duet. I joined in with a foot and fist obbligato when their harmony got a bit too Wagnerian.

We alighted from the train greatly refreshed, and made our way out of the station.

"This," said Hawk, stopping impressively and nearly being run down by a cab, "this is peace. The beneficent

sunshine descends, wrapping its mantle round the ancient William the Conquerish town, rich in historical associations and fresh fish. The distant clamor of the sea, Dobbs, wafts the ozone towards us. Lovely smell! Do you notice the ozone?"

"Not so well as you do, perhaps, as you happen to be standing with your back to a fish barrow," I said, with an impatient shrug. "Are you going to stand here and rant long? Hadn't we better be looking for rooms?"

"Mundane trifler. You've about as much poetry in you as a half-witted cow," complained Hawk. "Have it your way. Let us by all means seek apartments, and let's hope they'll be more comfortable than that place of yours at Middewick," he added, with a sneer at my home comforts.

So we sought. It was the height of the season, and it appeared that rooms were at a discount, or rather at par or above it. Landladies, strong with the righteousness of every bedroom filled and the family sleeping in the bathroom, snorted disdainfully, and sent us on unproductive journeys to friends who might have a spare bed. We fairly ransacked that town, and it was quite late when, utterly depressed, we came upon a complacent dame in a tucked-away street, who it seemed had a sitting-room and bedroom vacant. When we saw the rooms we understood why they were vacant. My impression still is that they were more in the nature of experiments than rooms, the question at issue being if one person was inside could another open the door without squashing the first into the fireplace.

"No children, I seepose?" asked the landlady, when we wearily signified our intention of stopping.

"Oh, no," said Hawk, "we've only a dog," unnecessarily adding we were both widowers, and the children were staying with grandma.

"A dog? Dogs is half a crown extra always," she simpered, "and all breakages to be paid for. You'll want the piano, of course?"

"I don't see one," I ventured.

"It's in the bedroom," said the landlady, in a confidential tone. "You see, me and me 'usbind 'ave bin usin' the bedroom ourselves, an' the piano comes in 'andy to put clothes in and what all. You'll find the bed well aired, as 'e's bin sleepin' in it all day through bein' out last night on a fishin'-smack. Came in so tired, poor feller, 'e didn't even trouble to undress. Cleanin' up them fishin'-boats is always 'ard work, as 'e rightly says."

("I bag the sofa," whispered Hawk to me in a definite tone.)

"Would you like any supper? Somethin' tasty after your 'ard walk? Me and me 'usbind's just goin' to 'ave a bite ourselves," said the landlady.

I had been looking about for the Demon, who must have hidden in the piano or some other coy place; but at the sound of the word supper I pricked up my ears and answered—

"Well, just a little snack, if you could manage it for us. Anything will do," I added, with visions of delicate fillets of sole, some cold beef and salad, with perhaps a sweet and black coffee to wind up with.

"Lemme see," she considered, "there's some fried tripe and liver we're 'avin', then there's a bit of cole cod the party upstairs sent down yesterday what's almost as good as new—"

We hastily assured her that after all we weren't particularly hungry, and would take a walk instead of a meal, and beat a precipitate retreat.

"Fried tripe!" groaned Hawk in a convulsed voice.

"Second-hand fish!" I wailed in bilious accents.

"After that a mouthful of sea air is imperative," he remarked, and cheered up a little at a glimpse of the ocean.

We came upon a part of the front away from the haunts of promenaders, seated ourselves on a rowing-boat which lay handy, and gazed out over the moonlit sea. It looked peaceful: a gentle swell rocked it in the shimmer of the summer moonlight, and a fishing-boat gracefully undulated as she forged her quiet way out. Hawk sat with a rapt expression on his chubby face and a poetic gleam in his pop

eyes. I felt for him, for the majesty of the night had also entered my soul. At last, in a hushed voice, he spoke.

"Dobbs, old man, I feel somehow ——"

Hawk sat with a rapt expression.

"So do I, old chap," I said yearnfully.

—"as though I could do with a nice, long, cool drink," he concluded with emotion.

I might have remembered that he was of the world, thirsty.

"What!" I asked. "Is that all you can think about? Didn't the beauty of that fishing-boat strike you?"

"Yes, it did. Reminded me of the pictures on bloater paste tins; and talking of bloater paste, where's the dog?"

"Dog? Didn't he come with us?"

"No; I missed him whilst the landlady was gassing about the succulent delights of her cuisine."

"Then we are in for trouble shortly," I said. "He's bad enough when present, but behind one's back he's nothing short of a national calamity."

"Well, he's your dog," said the unfeeling Hawk. "I'm not going to spoil my evening for him. Let's wander and gather local color. I'm beginning to feel in my element again."

There it was. Apart from his main characteristic, the quest of useless local color for possible thunder tales, Hawk had a fiendish way of absorbing his surroundings. If he were in the company of actors, one would imagine he had trodden the boards all his life; and were he amongst military fellows, he would grope unconsciously for his sword, settle imaginary chin straps, walk on tiptoe so as not to catch his spurs in the carpet, and order people about in a most martinet-like manner. His great fault was an excess of thoroughness. In the present

instance, imbued with naval ideas, caused by the proximity of the sea, he tried to imitate the ways of a man-of-war's captain, as he imagined one.

"Tumble up, my hearty," he remarked as he rose, "and we'll steam ahead."

We steamed. In a few minutes we came within hail of another craft; to be particular, a belated boatman, who ruminated and chewed (oh, memories of Mrs. Gibble!) against a railing, over which he expectorated on the virgin sands with methodical precision, three shots to the minute.

"Avast!" said Hawk, as he noticed the ancient mariner. "Let us board yonder vessel and get our bearings, Mr. Mate."

I sniffed.

"Good evening, my man," he condescended to the boatman.

"Wot?" asked the honest fellow, looking as if suddenly confronted with Neptune.

"I said Good evening," replied Hawk. ("You watch me draw him out," to me.) "No doubt you're dreaming of former battles with the waves, what?

"Wot's it got ter do with yew wot I'm doin'?" lowered the other.

"Well, I'm interested in the sea, you know," said Hawk lamely, who had expected the man to fall on his neck and make remarks about his likeness to Nelson. "I merely asked you, because I noticed what a fine seaman you looked."

The mariner regarded Hawk fishily for a moment, and then smiled softly to himself.

"You'd never think, sir, wot I wos a-lookin' for yonder?"

"Fishing-boats, what?"

"Smugglers, smugglers, sir!" said the fellow in a hoarse and beery whisper.

"Smugglers? Why, I thought their day was over!" exclaimed Hawk.

"Their night ain't, sir. Why, if I weren't so 'usky, I c'd tell yew things as would make yer 'air turn to water."

Hawk scented a yarn which would work up for his *Errand*

Boys' Gazette commission, and handed the man the wherewithal to remove his huskiness.

My own impression was that the sailor had a bet with himself on how much he could cram Hawk with before he gave the game away by laughing, but it was none of my business.

"I can see you're a sailor, sir," began our nautical Ananias (Hawk had once been from London to Margate by boat, not counting trips on penny steamers), "and I don't mind tellin' you there's a turrible lot o' smugglin' goes on 'ere. Somethin' shockin' it is. You see them caves in the 'ill 'ere are 'andy fur stowin' contriband, and it's seldom some o' the boys miss a night runnin' a cargo."

"Cargo of what?"

"Oh, rum, terbaccer, terbaccer an' rum, esseterer," said Sapphira's husband airily. "Lor, you'd be astonished. Risky game it be too, for there's the coast-guards; an' then there's the prize money, you know."

"Prize money?" asked Hawk.

"Yes, 'underds o' pounds is paid to anyone wot nabs 'em. I often envies other people wot can put the coast-guards on 'em, becos us chaps wot as yew may say wos brung up with the smugglers it wouldn't do for us to say anythin.' Why, bothered if that ain't one out there!" he went on with an attempt at excitement a child could have seen through, but Hawk failed to, "and dang it, she's makin' for shore. 'Ow I wish I might blow on 'em, but it's more'n me life's worth."

He shuffled about with a view to emphasizing his regret.

"How much is the reward?" asked the eager Hawk.

"'Underd quid for a smallun, 'underd an' fifty for a largeun, 'alf the value o' the stuff aboard, and a stifficate from the Royal 'Umane Sossiiety," the man answered steadily, though I saw him strangling a snigger.

Hawk nudged me.

"Gosh, this'll be the thing for us, Dobbs! Get enough money to make us independent if we catch a few of the beggars."

He then poured questions on our truthful James, who, to give him his due, had answers ready for the wildest query Hawk might make.

"Where do they land?"

"Ah, that's more than me life's worth, sir!" demurred George Washington.

"If I give you five bob will you tell me?"

"Couldn't be done under ten, sir, I'm afraid."

Hawk recklessly pressed half a sovereign on him, and the man covered his face with a large hand.

"It seems crool of me to give 'em away," he choked in a broken voice, "but they'll beach 'er near the fur side of the 'arbor."

"Isn't that rather risky?"

"Ah, that's their artfulness! Oo'd think o' lookin' fur smugglers in a 'arbor?" replied our friend with a cunning leer.

"There's some sense in that. What had I better do?"

"Well, you'd best watch 'em bring her in, an' then inform the coast-guards, sir. That's wot I'd do if I 'ad a free 'and."

Hawk turned to me, his little nose a-quiver, and said—

"Come on, we're just in time," then pattered off without the trouble of hearing my views on the matter.

I was anxious to see the finish, and only waited to exchange a wink with the fisherman Judas before I hurried off after the informer.

As the boatman had stated, the little craft had made the harbor, and from the shadow of a capstan we saw her prepare to beach.

"Now for the coast-guards!" exulted Hawk, and hurried me to their quarters.

A burly coast-guard confronted Hawk, and as the latter did nothing but puff and blow, very naturally he demanded to know what was up.

"Quick!" replied Hawk in a shrill whisper. "Tell your companions to arm and follow me."

"What's the good? It's nearly closing time," said the coast-guard.

"Good, man? Do you know there are some smugglers just landed, and that if you come now we can catch them red-handed?" squeaked Hawk, who, Silas Wegg-like, had dropped into rhyme without knowing it.

"Dear me, that's bad!" the coast-guard slowly replied. "Where did you say they are landing?"

"In the harbor."

The Coast-guards.

"Oh, in the harbor! I'll have to see about this. 'Arf a minute, sir," he said, whilst he turned into the building, and after a short interval emerged with three of his fellows.

They eagerly crowded round Hawk and listened to his tale. It appeared that Hawk had been sea-fishing from a small boat when this craft passed him. He didn't like the look of it (why not stated, as he had had little time to prepare his yarn), so he tied his boat to its stern and crept on board, where to his righteous horror as a British taxpayer he overheard the crew discussing which cave in the cliff to hide their smuggled cargo of rum and tobacco.

He produced his pipe to show a shred of the tobacco still left in it, and spoke of the smell of the rum until the coast-guards begged him not to harrow their thirsts like that. Well, after he had heard all he could, he climbed back into his boat unobserved, and rowed hard to land, which he reached just in time to see the smugglers enter the harbor. It was the work of a minute to fly to the Coast-guard Station, and—here he was.

He rather spoiled the story by an attempt to lug in an impossible adventure with a tremendous shark, but they didn't mind a bit. Indeed, they begged him to tell them over again, and he did, only in the excitement of the moment he

made the cargo brandy and cigars, which interested the listeners almost as much as the other one. I do not mean to infer that the coast-guards were anything but strictly sober, hard-working and worthy men; but you know that the mention of rum to a man of the sea makes him feel as poetical as a Scotchman is about the native dew of the Hielands. Hawk knocked that boatman into fits as a liar. Compared with Hawk, he was a complete Sunday companion for curates. The coast-guards did him honor. They said they'd never met a real adventurer before, if they might say so, and politely regretted he hadn't said more about the shark. Frank admiration was in their look—no envy, just a kind of awe, as they urged him to leave no detail untold.

"But aren't you coming?" he demanded at last.

"Can't manage it to-night, sir; some other evening," said coast-guard No. 1 in apologetic tones.

"Well, of all the ——. Never mind. If you don't know your duty, I do. I'll tackle 'em myself," said Hawk in disgust, and scuttled off with ferocious mien.

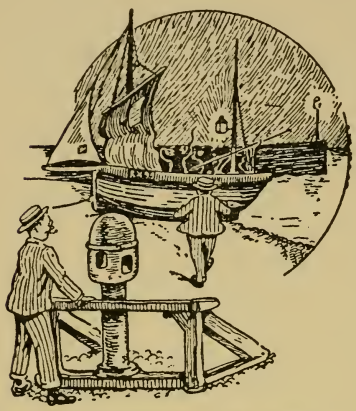
The coast-guards curled silently up and wept on each other's manly shoulders. At last one managed to gurgle—

"I'd give somethin' to see what old Sam looks like when that little fellow accuses him o' smugglin', 'specially as he has put back after startin' out, which means broken nets or somethin' serious."

I hastened after my avengeful friend as he ran towards the boat he had decided belonged to a smuggler. As a matter of fact, even dark as it was, he could have seen the smack—and smelt it—to be the *Liza Ann* of Hastings, owned by one native called Samuel Pottle. Moreover, the row the said Pottle was making over the question of torn nets should have told him his quarry was an honest fishing vessel. But when Hawk made up his mind definitely that black was white, nothing anybody could say, yell or storm altered his opinion. Any clear contradiction he regarded as simply a diplomatic attempt to draw him off the scent. So I wasn't surprised

to see him—a fat, portentous little figure—approach the *Liza Ann* with deadly intent.

For a smuggler, Mr. Pottle seemed to have a fine disregard for those silent methods usual to the fraternity. He labored, it seemed, under some strong emotion, which needed vent, for he was sending up to the quiet heavens a bull-like roaring, and emphasized the points of his discourse with a large and none too fresh dogfish held flailwise.



He approached the "Liza Ann."

"Wot!" howled Mr. Pottle, as he caught a member of the crew a sounding slap in the face with his clammy scepter, "you tell me those nets did break d'rectly we put 'em out because they wos rotten? Why, I've had them nets years—years, my chap, when you was only a little dirty brat of a thing a-runnin' about the sands. Must 'ave 'ad 'em twenty years an' never a brak nor break, so 'elp me, till you cussed Saturday night sailors pulled un to bits."

Another highly aggrieved voice wailed out upon the stillness—

"Yow and yowr old nets! I wonder yow eent struck, sayin' it was us. Nets be rotten, I tell yew! Y' owt tow be struck, y' ought."

"What for?" demanded Mr. Pottle, with a murderous brandish of the dogfish.

"Tellin' lies!" yelled the other, as he dived out of the line of fire.

"Tellin' lies?" snorted Mr. Pottle with a fine irony. "Ho! An' I wish I may be struck flat on this deck if I 'ave."

He got his wish. Hawk had been laboriously clambering up the bow of the smack, and at last poised on the side, from whence he, losing his footing, rolled on to the back of Mr. Pottle, who reclined with a savage bellow. Hawk seized him by the neck and shook him violently.

"I arrest you!" he skirled.

"What for, sir?" asked the smack-master with caution, for he had a sudden vision of a recent spree, in which he had accounted for a pair of policemen, a barman, three glasses, and a window. "It ain't that bit of a lark I 'ad up the old town, is it?"

"It's not exactly fun," said Hawk grimly. "Smuggling. Caught red-handed too, b' jove!"

Mr. Pottle's immediate reply took the form of a crash with the dogfish in Hawk's face, which caused him to loosen his hold in a second. To this reply the good Pottle added a few more remarks in the shape of further dogfish arguments, and as this particular denizen of the deep—known locally as a Robinhuss—is long, thin and heavy, it curled with cruel detail round the rotundities of his unfortunate captive.

"Me a smuggler, wots been bred and born in the town, and got as good a repitation as most? Yow bloomin' tripper! I've had yowr kind before. Spent all your money, an' tryin' to get a cheap lodgin' on my boat, eh?"

Mr. Pottle.

Bang, whack, bang went the dogfish, like a Greek chorus, and Hawk gasped out—

"Not a smuggler? Stop, there must be some mistake."

Mr. Pottle ceased, and leant against the mast to hear Hawk's explanation. When that unfortunate finished the smack-master sat down limply.

"It's so good as a play," he roared, "to think of old Bill gettin' yow to believe that yarn! Never mind, my chap, I forgive yow hearty."

Taking into consideration that he had thrashed Hawk within an inch of his life, and worked off his spleen about the

nets, he was none too magnanimous. Hawk seemed to think so too.

"I'll have you up for assault!" he screamed, as the dog-fish trade-marks began to throb. "I'll drag you through every court there is, you brute!"

Mr. Pottle regarded him jocosely. There seemed to be a richness about the situation which appealed to him.

"That's right. Look 'ow well it'll read in the noospapers: A Fisherman arrested as a Smuggler by a Tripper wot 'e 'alf killed with a pore little fish! Go 'ome and get someone to look arter yow."

With muttered threats of dire vengeance, Hawk stiffly dragged to the side, climbed wearily on to it, and was assisted by a parting flip of the fish, which caught him in the rear, and caused him to spread-eagle on the beach. A gleeful chuckle came over the side as he picked himself up.

"Gi' my love to the coast-guards," floated after us as we faded into the darkness.

After an interval, I fear a profane one on Hawk's part, I remarked in a judicial tone—

"Perhaps this'll teach you not to make quite such an abject idiot of yourself."

"Your time's coming, my son!" he hissed. "I may have misfortunes, but I at least haven't a dog."

Ananias.

We ran the gauntlet of the chuckling coast-guards, who deplored Hawk's inability to capture the smuggler, and the boating Ananias, who still gazed out to sea with every expression of interest until we approached, when he receded gracefully into the distance, making as he went the night hideous with a monologue imitation of Mr. Pottle's voice and Hawk's shrieks; whilst I dwelt with discalm on the Demon's possible delinquencies in our absence.

Directly we got inside the door of our lodgings I perceived that my fears had not been groundless.

CHAPTER VIII

Refers to the landlady's bill for the dog's doings, and a night of unrest. The cod again, and breakfast out. The kitchen lift and the dog. The animated breakfast and the waiter. We agree to relax.

THE landlady met us in the passage with an appearance of apoplexy, added to by a certain tremulousness about the head which boded ill.

With one hand fluttering about the vast expanse of her dingy blouse to indicate the state of her heart, she held in the other a lengthy paper, and at sight of us panted, "Anythin' right an' proper me an' me 'usbind don't mind, but reelly your dog, gentlemen—which I 'opes you'll act as such—well, perhaps it'd be more pleasanter for all parties if you'd settle as you go along? 'Ere's the bill for what 'e's did to-night."

I had a hopeless feeling about our funds if the Demon was going to run up expenses at the rate set down on her document, which she had thrust into my hands. It ran as follows:—

	s.	d.
2 tripe suppers	2	0
1 pece of cole cod	1	0
1½ peshun cat	10	0
1 pint beer upset	0	3
1 Bruken Jug	1	0
3 bites (me 'usbind)	15	0
4 chickins (when it was put in the yard) ..	12	0
1 bottel Brandy (for me being upset) ..	4	0
Jeniral Damij	10	0
Total	2lb.	15/6

We proceeded to inspect the damage in a very chastened frame and pointed out that the cat was not up to the estimate,

whilst how a dog of the Demon's size could eat four fowls without leaving a feather behind to prove his offense was an abiding mystery.

The bill.

"'E's a dreadful dog for happetite," said the landlady. "You ought to 'ave seen 'im gobblin' that cod up, which it was a lovely piece, an' for the upstair party to say it weren't fresh—well, 'ow some people 'ave the face."

The bites we compromised on for half a crown, one on the nose looking suspiciously like a pimple; and the landlord coyly refused to expose the others for valuation purposes. "Where's your modesty?" he had asked hotly.

As to the brandy, Hawk, as a lifelong abstainer, sternly set his countenance against it. He urged that alcohol in any form was prejudicial to health. The landlady's production of the empty bottle (which had been evidently used to hold paraffin) set him off into such a dissertation on hob-nailed liver that the landlord had the strength of mind to pour the rest of his beer into the scuttle, brightening up, however, on noticing he had mistaken his wife's glass for his own. She, overawed by Hawk's flood of words, wilted so much as to accept five shillings in full settlement, which (unless the modest husband's honorable wounds were not on a par with the vanished chickens) was a clear profit of four and six, as the cat had no value.

"And now, where is the dog?" I asked.

"He's a-sleepin' on the bed, I fancy, sir," said the dame. "Pore little thing, 'e quite missed you! Come outside that affectionate" —she pulled herself up in time—"that you'd never believe 'e 'ad it in 'im to bite."

Mr. Landlady.

When I reached our apartments Hawk had already monopolized the sofa and all the available cushions; and as the bed

had been occupied by the landlord all day—from its appearance, for many days,—and the Demon was stretched on the pillow, I searched vainly for a place to lay me down.

The leg of the table kindly suggested the floor by the homely method of getting its legs in the way, the arm-chair (the one arm-chair) seemed to be full of clever wire traps to prod and pinch the unwary, and the round table-top rose up and slid me off when I tried to turn it into a dewy couch.

I cogitated strenuously for some time before the idea struck me to awaken Hawk and collar the sofa.

"Hst!" I said, as I dug him in the side, "wake up. There's been someone at the door for you. Sounded like your smuggler friend."

"Has he, by jingo?" shouted the warlike little man, as he jumped off the sofa. "Has he? I'll jolly well give him ask for me," and dashed into the passage.

As I made myself comfortable on the sofa he came back.

"There's no one there, you ass!" said he bitterly. "Fancy, waking a chap up like that! Pity you're not—why, where's he got to?" His eye roved over the most unlikely places first, and glared suspiciously up the chimney, in strict accordance with his mad scheme of life, and finally sighted me, needless to say, deeply, unwakably asleep. I heard him growl to himself, and then was almost startled into opening my eyes by a sudden yell of "Fire!" in my left ear. "Wake up, Dobbs, the place is alight!"

I snored; he snorted. After an interval came—

"Dobbs, the landlady wants you; the Demon's killed her husband."

"Dear old Demon!" I murmured, and snored again.

Hawk took a dejected stroll round the room and came back.

"Dear old Demon!" I breathed again.

His answer was to plant the dog square on my chest.

"If you're so fond of him, take him," he shouted, and stalked into the bedroom.

But I knew his wiles. He would watch until I shook the

pup off, and during the shaking he'd pitch me off the sofa. So I lay with the Demon's weight over my left lung, and waited until I heard Hawk, with audible disgust, make up a bed on the floor, where I shortly joined him, the sofa having succumbed to the combined weight of the Demon and myself.

The night passed quickly, for, tired out as we were, we could have slept in a phonograph factory during blasting operations with the greatest ease. I awoke to hear our kind landlady tapping on the door with her fist, and asking our views on breakfast. The mere mention of food woke Hawk. He answered, "Just a little coffee, some bacon and eggs, you know, and toast and marmalade and that sort of thing, what?" She seemed to think it was a nice breakfast, but at the same time she had no bacon or eggs, neither was she possessed of coffee or marmalade.

"No eggs from those fowls you talked about?" demanded Hawk through the keyhole.

"They was roosters, sir," she answered blandly, and stated, although she had nothing we asked for, she could let us have some fish, boiled or fried.

"What kind of fish?" I asked.

With a fine disregard for her bill of last night, she answered—

"A nice bit of cod, sir."

It was that extremely fishy bit of fish that, metaphorically speaking, became the last straw to break our camels backs. We began to understand why people shunned the Ishmaelites; and we both in chorus assured her we would breakfast out to save her the trouble of cooking. The next few minutes were devoted to dressing at speed limit and a bit over.

On the safe side of the front door Hawk stopped abruptly. I knew those stops of old. They presaged either a weighty decision or the request for a loan, if his fiendish trade of supplying youth in the bud with marrow freezers at so much per thousand words had not paid well for a while. In this case my friend had stopped to register a vow. It was rather a pity he had not let the Demon know he was going to stop,

for the pup, who was not told to stand still, got mixed up with Hawk's legs, to the latter's great disgust. When he had fluently described the antecedents of the Demon, and what he hoped in the fullness of time might happen to him, he returned to the cause of his solemn stop.

"Hear me swear," he said.

I told him that I had just been favored with a fine specimen of his adjectival facilities, and greatly admired them, so he could surely rest on his laurels; but he thought different.

"No, hear me swear a most solemn swear, to the effect that I hereby, and all my heirs, tenements, ground rents, and net personality, do renounce, revoke, abjure, and otherwise utterly condemn, despise and loathe the piscatorial animal known and called and reputed to be Cod. . . . By jingo! that phraseology would come in well in a book, what? Can't you see the old squire cussing it out to the family solicitor, whilst the prodigal son is collaring the silver through the pantry window?"

"Oh, shut up!" I said. "I'm famished, and I don't want the life taken out of my appetite by your beastly reminder about that Jonah fish."

"Well, what are you standing here for, then?" he growled. "Let's find a restaurant."

After two or three false shots we came to one, and cheered up at the thought of a good meal. It was one of Hawk's peculiarities to affect a most cosmopolitan knowledge of languages, possibly because he found them handy to cuss in when his mere English phrases gave out. At the same time there was no necessity to befog an obviously Scotch waiter with requests in a mixture of French, Italian, and German, especially as we were hungry. In fact, the waiter said if he used that language in here, he'd have to fetch the proprietor. The waiter said he could understand language after a meal at that restaurant, but to waste it before testing the work of their chef was a thing which might afterwards be bitterly regretted when adjectives ran out. So when his knowledge of tongues was vindicated to his own, if nobody else's satisfac-

tion, Hawk descended to his native lingo, and soundly berated the waiter for not bringing the menu before. All this waste of time exasperated me. I wanted my breakfast. So I kicked out at Hawk under the table as a mild way of letting him know I despised him altogether as a breakfast orderer.

Unfortunately, I landed the Demon instead of Hawk, and in a tender spot too, where, I was unable to see, as he was under the table amongst my legs. Whereupon that wretched dog fled for the first cover he could find, which happened to be the kitchen lift—one of those shafts down which a waiter bawls your order, and in a few minutes pulls a rope, and up the lift, from the chamber of weird deeds below, comes the sole of an old boot fried in train oil and garnished with little bits of fried wood. That, at least, is what your palate makes of it, although the waiter calls it steak and chips.

Down this the Demon plunged, his disappearance followed by sundry crashes and woeful noises as of agony. The waiter tore from a table where he was in the act of pouring coffee out for an old gentleman, and flew to the lift, still pouring coffee on the floor and anything else that came in his way.

He dragged at the rope with both hands, his preposterous little legs flew off the ground in his eagerness, and after a few hefty pulls up shot a most fearsome object, which appalled both Hawk and myself. It entirely overcame Hawk, who fled precipitately under the table, and took the cloth and cruet with him by accident.

The apparition.

"My stars!" I heard him groan, "I'm going mad on food! First that cod, and now our breakfast comes to life."

For a moment it almost seemed as if he were right, unless this awful thing was a visitation on the waiter for overcharging.

It had two squashed poached eggs for eyes; its body was plastered with a mixture of rashers, marmalade, pieces of

toast, and pats of butter. It wore pieces of broken plate also, and over all was some liquid which steamed and smoked. With a gibber that merged into a howl, the apparition leaped upon the waiter, who went down as if shot; then it sped out of the door like an arrow.

"Has it gone?" whispered Hawk from his cave under the table. "Do you think it could have been the spirit of that cod come to persuade us to eat its earthly shape so it could rest?"

"Yes, it's gone," I answered, "and the Demon too; also our breakfast. He must have met it coming up as he went down."

We had to wait another half-hour whilst another lot was cooked. The waiter in the interim was really offensive on the matter of breakages. We pointed out to him if he thought fit to not keep his grub chained up, as the best gorgonzolas are, he must take the consequences of it running away. Not only that, Hawk added, but the food that came up seemed to have eaten our dog, unless it was that when the dog went down they sent the poached-egg creature up to create a diversion whilst they converted the pup into jugged hare. It was all very well, said Hawk, to come talking to us about broken plates, but how did we know that the gazeeb that came up that lift wasn't some poor cod left over the last time the auditors came and carried forward to the next balance sheet, and in the meantime the poor thing had got so high it had ascended rocketwise?

That cod.

And for the matter of that, I added, why should we be asked to pay for things we'd never done? *We* hadn't been near the kitchen lift, and we certainly felt he owed us a breakfast (he had to admit the one we ordered had vanished); and if he couldn't break in his breakfasts properly, so that they didn't go cavorting off directly they got into the fresh air, the sooner he took lessons in ju-jitsu, or whatever was necessary

to subdue unruly eggs and bacon, the better. Besides, think of the advertisement he'd have got, even if it had been our dog got mixed up with the grub in the lift. If he'd only have hung a card round its neck before it dodged off with "This is One of Our Shilling Breakfasts" on it, he'd have had such a run on the place he'd have had to enlarge the premises. I fancy he came to the conclusion we were both a little touched; for after staring at us with his mouth open, he went away in silence, and was so cowed that if we hadn't called for the bill at the finish he would never have offered it to us.

With his mouth full of toast (second order, of course), Hawk became gloomy when he considered our future with the Demon.

"He'll smash us up yet," he groaned. "He's a regular evil spirit. Five bob and a breakfast for two to his account since last night. I must try to work him off somehow."

Mention of the Demon brought my troubles up again, so I begged Hawk to dry up and be cheerful.

"We're pretty sure to get into a fine mess when our recent acts start paying dividends, so you might just as well suggest some way of enlivening our few remaining days of liberty before the crash comes. What shall we do now?"

"Right-o," he answered, "we'll away with dull care, and hie for the open road and generally cavort, shall we?"

"So far as quiet enjoyment goes, I'm with you," said I, as he rose to pay the bill, and this settled, we walked out.

The Demon, sleek and satisfied, hove in view at once. He looked happy, and there remained nothing of our breakfast except the yolk of one egg over his left eye, which he was doing his best to reach with a long but ineffective tongue.

He wagged a gleeful tail at us and fell in behind, to share our joys and help us into sorrows. Hawk led the way to the Front, and pointed out, quite unnecessarily, that if it hadn't been for him, instead of enjoying sea breezes in congenial company I should be mewed up in Middewick, and getting

more and more thick-headed. As it was, I had every chance to enlarge my mind and mingle with the gay throng.

I reserved my opinion on the matter. I knew Hawk's placid remarks usually led up to some fool outburst, and there was a growing gleam in his eye which pointed to developments in the near future.

CHAPTER IX

Shows how Hawk bought a guinea-pig, and its pier experiences. The dog has a hunt, and the guinea-pig seeks cover. The gouty gentleman in flannel and a Bath chair, who, with the dog and the guinea-pig, hastens the diving of the high diver, whom Hawk mistakenly rescues, and he rescues Hawk, and both have a lively time through the elusiveness of the dog.

We spent a pleasant quarter of an hour in walking towards the pier and wrangling over the many incidents that had come our way. I was convinced, and said so, that the beginning of our troubles was due to Hawk; at least, Hawk and the dog. He, on the other hand, seemed satisfied that he was really the angel out of the machine, as it were, and that had it not been for him I should now, as he picturesquely put it, "be standing on the guillotine with a halter round my neck." It came to me suddenly that the best way to answer him would be to shove him into a pack of donkeys, standing at hand, to catch the coppers of the unwary. This, with the cryptic remark "Birds of a feather," I did. However, even his own kind rejected him, and instead of putting the blame on them for not making a fuss of him, he most incontinently raved at me.

"Goat-like tricks worthy of a board school," he blared. "Now I know why I was so anxious to get you on the pier. One accidental push, and then it will only remain to finish the dog up too. You've brought us to a fine enough pass without acting the fool."

He'd have said a lot more, only at this point a miserable-looking man in frayed trousers and a rubicund nose (he wore other things as well, but these stood out) caught his volatile attention, and he stopped.

The man shuffled up and thrust something that wriggled into my hand. I don't like things that wriggle, so I quickly transferred it to Hawk.

"Why, it's a guinea-pig!" said Hawk. "Whoop! Watch me hold him up by the eyes for his tail to drop out."

He started to fool about with the unfortunate animal, whilst the man with the nose urged him to buy it.

"Itsh a nashral curioshty," said the man, "an' as I mush 'ave s' money for my pore child an' sheven starvin' wivesh—anyhow, y' know worri mean, guvnor. You can 'ave it f'r quid. Lovely lill' guinea-pigsh f'r shovreign. Givin' it awy, thash wor I am," he added with a philanthropic lurch.

There was no doubt he was giving it away, and it was typical of Hawk to make an exhibition of himself by chaffering for guinea-pigs with a maudlin tramp, in broad daylight too.

"I'll give you fourpence," said Hawk, after examining the pig. "You see, it's evidently a damaged one—no tail, you know."

"'And it over," said the tramp with another lurch, and to my horror Hawk did so, and after the tramp had bidden the guinea-pig a weeping farewell, he gathered it up in his arms and tenderly marched along with it.

"What did you want to buy that for?" I asked in disgust.

"You've got a pig of a dog, so why shouldn't I have a little pigglums too?" he demanded, as he caressed his purchase. "Never saw such a selfish chap. I've as much right to take my pig on the pier for a blow as you have to take a dog."

It maddened me to have to walk with a conspicuous idiot who fondled a piebald guinea-pig. Everybody stared.

"Put it down," I hissed.

"Certainly," said Hawk. He produced a piece of string from his pocket, to which he tied his pet with exaggerated care. "Come along, darling," he went on in a high falsetto voice. "I simply dote on pomeranians."

As he kept this sort of jest up the whole length of the pier, it speaks well for my restraint that I didn't pitch him, pig and all, over the side; but just when my feelings were getting beyond me the Demon took it into his head to play at fox-

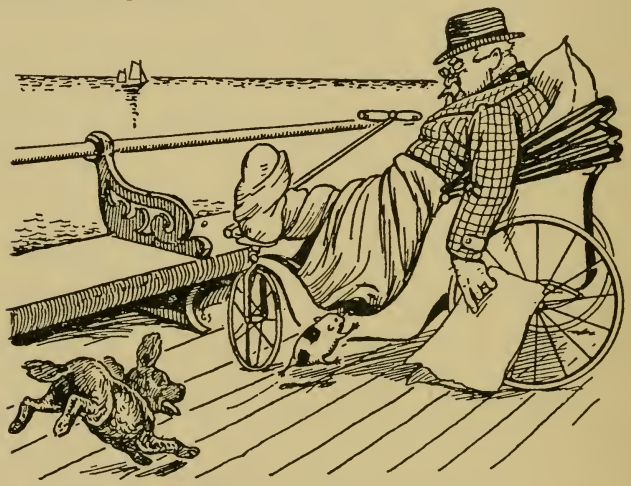
hunting, with the pig for fox. The pig hurriedly took shelter in the Bath chair of a somnolent invalid, who had one leg ominously cased in flannel, and gave evidence of another one also wrapped under his many rugs.

"Thank goodness, it's gone at last!" I exclaimed.

"You don't mean to say you imagine I shall desert that pig in the hour of its affliction, do you?" demanded Hawk. "How dare that old flannelled fool hide my pig? I'll jolly soon show him!"

It was never any use to dissuade him, so I let him go his own mad way, which in this instance took him up to the slumberer, whom he tapped on the shoulder.

"Excuse me, but are you aware you've got my pig?" asked Hawk politely.



The guinea-pig took shelter in a bath chair.

"*Eh?*" said the old man, waking up, and giving a ferocious snort.

"My pig," exclaimed Hawk.

"Who are you calling a pig?" roared the old fellow. "Demme, for two pins——"

"No doubt, but I want my pig," persisted Hawk, "my pretty little guinea-pig."

"Are you mad, sir? I haven't got your blessed pig. Fancy I'm a farmyard thief, eh? Do I look as though I was a pig purloiner?"

"You do," replied Hawk, "and you've got it about you now."

"Oh, I have, have I? What the dooce do you mean?" sneered the other, blue in the face with rage and suppressed gout. "And where might I have concealed it, you demmed impident scamp?"

"Well, I saw it get into your chair, but if you persist you haven't got it I must simply see my solicitor," said Hawk in a lofty tone.

As he spoke the guinea-pig started a tour of inspection with a view to food, and he is hardly to be blamed for thinking the flannel casings of the invalid's legs to be some new kind of guinea-pig entrée, although he need not have bitten through to the gout at once.

The old gentleman gave one awful yell and bounce, and flung himself out of the chair, which he unfortunately brought over with him.

This action thoroughly disorganized Hawk's pet, and in self-defense it took several more bites at the gout, on which it blamed the upheaval. The old boy bellowed and grovelled under the upturned chair, while the guinea-pig, whose pied hindquarters we could discern feverishly struggling, hung on like grim death. The Demon saw the pig too, and remembered he had not completed his hunt, so he broke cover once more, and burrowed under the chair too. That he mistook the white flannel-cased foot for the guinea-pig's back should not be laid to his account too strongly. We are all liable to make mistakes. How the incident really ended I know not, for Hawk led me away to less moving scenes.

"Now you can understand why I speculated fourpence on it, Dobbs. Trust a guinea-pig to give you an insight into human

nature. By this time the old boy's eyes will have dropped out, even if the pig's haven't."

At the pier-head stood a man who mechanically intoned a kind of chant. "This way for the Haigh Daiving; the Haigh Daiving this way." Sixteen times to the minute he gave this message to the world, and only got out of his stride because Hawk foolishly tried to put a penny in his mouth, "to see," he explained, "if he couldn't turn on a song for a change."

Behind the man was erected a horizontal board, which stretched well over the water, and was evidently for the Haigh Daiver to tumble off.

I wondered if, in the absence of anyone else, the chanter was to disport personally for our edification when he had finished the address to his constituents. But it turned out the original Simon Pure was commercially engaged on the lower deck, clothed in a fierce red mustache, an elderly red dressing-gown and several purple shivers, taking up a collection before the event, to prevent his audience appearing mean by slyly fading away before he had time to get out of the water. A very sensible idea, that showed an acquaintance with human weaknesses which did him credit.

Hawk was engaged. He was making the eyes of respectful admiration that are known as sheep's eyes at a girl in a red blouse and picture-postcard teeth. I formed a poor opinion of her at once, on the fact that she could simper when looked at by such a fish-eyed moonstruck idiot as Hawk at the moment appeared.

At last the diver prepared for business. After thoughtfully handing the money-box to his high priest, in case he did not come up again, he discarded the dressing-gown and shone resplendent in a blue bathing suit, in which he ran nimbly along the diving-board and turned and harangued the crowd from its end. They stood round with that look of interest only seen on a crowd's face when something possibly dangerous is about to be performed, and some of them wore an expression of positive regret when they saw

there was nothing for him to strike his head on when he dived.

The good diver, having in detail reviewed his past successes, animadverted on the pretensions of all other high divers, affectionately commended the money-box to our interest again (and seemed half inclined to take it round and explain its uses once more), and warned his familiar to keep it handy, turned towards the sea.

Hawk was so taken up with the toothy female that he saw nothing of the diver, which makes his subsequent misfortune clear.

At the psychological moment when the diver, after a last fervent commendation of the money-box to all, raised his hands to dive, I heard a succession of violent thuds behind me, and the Demon flew by, up the diving-board steps, along the board, and through the diver's legs, causing that unhappy man to reel, somersault, yell, and enter the water with a terrific splash just after the Demon did.

The Demon flew by.

The reason for the Demon's desire for change of scenery arrived the next moment in the shape of a roaring mass of animated gout, which in the person of the old invalid gentleman pranced to the side, and flung the mangled remains of his flannel wraps into the sea. The guinea-pig was *non est*, and never appeared again, so I concluded it must have been mixed up in the flannel.

Hawk heard the yells and splash without having seen the cause, and as his fair unknown had gone down to the lower deck, he rashly concluded that she, driven crazy by sudden affection for him, had sought a watery grave rather than marry another. (In reality she had gone below to finish a

bag of shrimps she felt would have been detrimental to soulfulness if eaten in his sight.)

Hawk, therefore, threw off his coat and hat, bravely ramped along the diving-board, and sprang off the end. I saw him reach the waves and disappear, to rise again with a large bunch of seaweed over his head and eyes, whilst he struggled with the indignant diver, whom he blindly took for the shrimp lady.

Rescued.

His voice came up to me as he besought her not to struggle but to leave all to him.

"Let yourself go, my dear," puffed Hawk, "don't struggle, there's a good girl. I'll soon have you out," as he grappled with the frenzied diver.

"Let go, you lunatic!" raved the diver. "What are you playing at?"

"Hush, my pretty one!" pleaded Hawk, who supported his writhing burden with one arm, whilst he tried to swim with the other, and pull his seaweed bandage off at the same time. "Trust me, dear one. Dash this seaweed! What the dooce are you wriggling for?" he complained, his speechless burden wrenching madly at his arm. "If you're not quiet I'll have to duck you for your own sake, my dear," Hawk spluttered.

"I'll give you duck, you flat-footed walrus!" screamed the diver with a wild plunge. "It's bad enough to be upset by a blank dog and have your show spoiled, without a blank mermaid lunatic to drop from the clouds on me and blank well coo."

"You will have it then?" Hawk gasped, and dragged the diver below the surface.

When they rose Hawk's coronet of seaweed had come off, and we obtained an astonished and uninterrupted view of a

highly hectic high diver giving an exhibition of fancy ball punching (with Hawk's head for the ball) in the water, to a delighted audience on the pier.

"But where's the girl?" gulped Hawk, as he warded off the blows as well as he could.

"What girl?" shouted the diver, as he gave Hawk a slam in the chest.

"Why," croaked Hawk, "a lovely female fell into the water, and I dived in to rescue her, not an overgrown whelk with the D.T.'s.'

"Well, where is she?" asked the diver, who stopped his blows and trod water.

"Drowned by now," answered Hawk with a bitter sneer.

The diver scanned the crested waves and sighted something which floated at a distance. I, from my vantage point, could have informed him it was the Demon, but I never like to spoil sport.

"Jiminy, there she is!" exclaimed he, just as the Demon disappeared under a wave. Both swam eagerly towards the spot, but when they reached it no sight of a beautiful creature in distress gladdened their eyes.

"She's sunk!" howled Hawk, and dived frantically, the diver nobly doing the same. They didn't find her down there, but it was very evident they found each other, for they arose in fond embrace.

"Got her!" yelled the diver in exultant tones.

"At last, my darling!" burbled Hawk.

Then they both saw who "her" was, and fisted the dual lady in the eye.

"You bloated porpoise!" snorted the enraged diver, "I nearly had her if you hadn't stuck your ugly carcass in the way."

"And I just touched her hair when your infernal foot got me in the mouth," shouted Hawk.

To keep the interest up the Demon came upon them suddenly, by way of the crest of a wave, and both snatched wildly at what they thought was the fair one's raven locks,

only to catch each other a clumsy grab in the face instead. This naturally started them again, when Hawk happened to glance towards the pier, and saw his inamorata in the calm enjoyment of shrimps and his antics.

"Why, she never fell in at all!" he exclaimed.

"What a liar you are!" fumed the diver. "Haven't we both just missed her?"

"How could we, when she never fell in?" blared Hawk, in a voice easily hearable at Eastbourne.

"What was it, then?" asked the perplexed diver.

"How should I know, fathead?" answered Hawk in cold fury, and aimed a blow at the other.

They sank in fierce combat once more, and the Demon thought this a good opportunity to come up between them, getting away on a friendly wave before they realized what it was.

"Holy smoke! What was that?" asked the diver.

"Perhaps it was a shark!" gruesomely suggested Hawk.

At this both leapt out of the water with great celerity.

"Here it comes again!" gibbered the diver, as the Demon showed momentarily near them, a statement which caused both to beat a precipitate retreat towards the pier. The Demon paddled leisurely along behind them, and reached the iron steps leading to the deck almost as soon as they did.

With many shudders, the two hunted swimmers climbed out of the water, and stopped to gasp thankfully on the steps, in time to see the Demon drag himself out of the sea, shake, and sit down to dry. They glowered at him with incredulous eyes.

"Was that your girl?" asked Hawk.

"Was that your shark?" asked the diver, and added, as the remembrance of his wrongs scorched him, "And I've had my show spoilt by a blessed pup and a bally lunatic, have I? Wait till I get dry, and I'll attend to you, my friend."

"I'm your man!" fumed Hawk, as mute with rage they ascended to the upper deck, where a cheering crowd awaited them. The Demon proudly brought up the rear. The diver began to explain to his assistant the enormities of Hawk.

"Queered the whole blank show with his blankety blank blankness," he growled. The assistant, however, instead of joining against Hawk, whispered eager words into his master's ear.

"What, full do you say?" asked the diver.

"Filled to the brim," replied the other, "and half my pockets too. The people simply showered money on me. They said they'd never seen an entertainment like it."

The clouds left that diver's face, and he turned a sunny look on Hawk.

"My dear old chap," he enthused, with outstretched hand, "will you join the show? We ought to mint money."

But Hawk's soul was bitter within him, and he rejected the diver's friendly overtures, preferring to chevy the Demon round the deck with futile kicks until that hunted doe sought sanctuary in my arms. Wet as he was, my heart went out to him after the way he had dealt with Hawk.

"Let me get hold of the beggar!" said the latter with blood-thirsty calm.

"Certainly not. You can't blame all your idiocy on the poor dog. He shall follow us to the bitter end. Who knows but that if I produce him in the dock Uncle Boscobel will relent?"

"I'm not inclined to stand here and listen to your blither. I'm going to get my things dried. If you play any more of your childish games, you and your dog, don't expect me to support you," he said, and marched off to get his coat, which some enthusiastic person had thrown into the sea after him, and three boys with a fishing-rod were having the time of their lives catching.

I sat and ruminated on many things, which included Hawk's twisted mind, the surface capacity of the Demon's coat for salt water, and the fact that I was hungry. The last seemed most important, so I followed Hawk's wet tracks.

The question of the future on top of an empty inner man lay on my mind like a blight, and the Demon lay damp and shivering in my arms. What would happen next?

CHAPTER X

In which Hawk dries his only suit. The piano as a clothes-horse. That awful cod drives me out. Hawk's dire troubles during my absence. The piano-tuner. The dog introduces him to the lady in search of rooms—and the lady's husband. Hawk manages to throw the blame on me by playing the wrong card. We go bathing. The dog again causes trouble.

On our return, Hawk stalked into our palatial sitting-room, flung himself into a chair, and made remarks about divers and the universe in general.

"It's all the fault of that cussed hound of yours, Dobbs," he grumped. "Here I am, doing all I can to help a chap through his troubles, and he must go and bring a fool dog along to help drown his best friend. Think what a mess you'd be in if it wasn't for me. You'd be under arrest for trying to boil your Uncle alive, also for nearly killing a policeman, and for setting your dog on to an inoffensive old geezer and her son. Why, it don't bear thinking about. You never——"

"Steady!" I interrupted. "If it hadn't been for your confounded interference, I'd very likely be seated by now in Uncle's best drawing-room, with the old boy dissolved in affectionate tears on my shoulder."

"Tears of rage or a tearing rage, more likely," sneered Hawk.

Beastly way that fellow had of belittling one's finer feelings. To my mind, the thought of dear old Uncle Boscobel seated on my knee and crying with quiet joy at the prodigal's return, whilst Pectora killed the fatted chicken in the yard, was infinitely pathetic. There is something in the thought of Uncle crying gently whilst I wiped his tears with his coat-tails that brings a lump in my throat even now; and there is no doubt at all if I had endeavored to wipe Uncle's weeps away with anything, let alone a frock-coat's caudal appendages, I should have had lumps elsewhere besides my throat. Hawk always

was a rotten materialistic chap though, and instead of contemplating the affecting picture I had conjured up, he moodily dripped into the bedroom to disrobe.

You remember there was a piano in the bedroom? So did Hawk. I felt interested to know what the next person who played on it would think of the tone, for Hawk had emulated our landlady by the use to which he put the instrument.

By the time he had finished, that piano might have passed for a second-hand clothes shop, a prize-winner at a fancy dress ball, or a portrait of a bachelor's home after an explosion—in fact, as anything but a piano.

The candle sconces were decorated with a wet boot each; the music rest bore a well-soaked pair of braces and a collar and tie festooned around it; a pair of trousers gracefully draped themselves over the keys; whilst a coat, shirt and waistcoat hid the top from view, and allowed rivulets of sea-water to meander down the sides of the thing with quite water-fallish effects. Round the legs—it was one of those pianos with legs and more other ornamental woodwork than its melody warranted—were twisted other garments of a more intimate nature, and the pedals were decently covered with a pair of socks, the mauve of which ran into the green stripes with fearsome results to the artistic eye.

A stern, Roman-toga'd individual.

In front of this musical clothes-horse stood a stern, Roman-toga'd individual—Hawk in a counterpane. It was awkward he had omitted to bring a change of clothes.

"If you were half a chap," he said, menacing me with a fistful of his toga, "you'd lend me your things to wear till mine dried. You could easily go to bed. If it was you now who had been so unfortunate as to fall into the sea, I should have been the first

to—— Who the dickens is that at the door? Wait, you fool, whilst I hide."

"Would you like any lunch, sirs?" came the dulcet voice of our landlady.

I was just going to say Yes, when I saw a bare arm wave negatively from behind the piano, and heard a whisper, "Cod!" So I opened the door an inch or two and said No, and that I was just going out to get something cold sent in, to save her the trouble of a lunch.

"No trouble, sir," she said kindly; "I've got a nice bit o' cold fish, I thought you'd like as a snack, for I says to meself, they'll come in 'ungry, and they'll just fancy a nice piece of cod with 'arvey sorce."

I don't know how I managed to speak, but I led her to understand I was there and then going out to hurry up the lunch, which I was careful to say we had ordered on our way back. It was most kind of her to think of us, and if we hadn't already got some lunch coming in, we should have thoroughly enjoyed the cod—here I heard her murmur it *was* fresh, despite what the mysterious party had said about it—and I was sorry I couldn't stop to chat, but I really must be off, with which I closed the door.

"You're not going to leave me like this?" exclaimed Hawk, as he emerged from behind the piano.

"Well, if I don't go out now, she'll only bring that fish up again; and I don't know how you feel, but if I don't have some grub soon I shall go into a gentle decline."

"Well, don't be long," he said in a doleful voice. "Bring in a tongue and some Basses and a bottle or two of Scotch, because if my things don't dry to-day I shall want something to amuse myself with. And you might get a box of cigars and some sardines; and, by the way, it'll be awkward to have to go out again, so make it two bottles of Scotch and a couple of siphons. I know what a beggar you are for tonics."

This was such a barefaced and cruel assertion I was suddenly impelled to smite him upon the crest, as they have it in historical books, and only avoided his return charge

through his ignorance of the ways of counterpane togas. I left him a struggling heap upon the floor with a happy black puppy thoroughly enjoying the game.

It may have been reprehensible, but I did not hurry myself. I certainly went to a sandwich merchant's and satisfied my own immediate gnawfulness, and also looked about for a really good place to order lunch from, but I wisely didn't take the first that came to hand. I knew Hawk would grumble, if it wasn't a tip-top lunch, and sooner than upset him, I would stop out all day till I did find the exact thing. Moreover, at best he was a poor companion, full of grumbles and strange cuss-words, and there would be no harm in letting him stew for a bit, as until his clothes were dry he was comparatively innocuous.

In the meantime I would have a look round free from Hawks and other wildfowl. So I ambled down to the beach, and hired me a small boat with a man to row it. My first idea was to have a three hours' trip on the briny, but on my discovering that all the money I possessed was half a crown (for Hawk held our joint funds), we compromised on a shilling "there and back." I do not know how far "there" was, but it was effective.

For fear of accidents, I decided to hang on to my remaining eighteen pence, and therefore spent a free two hours in the local museum, where I found a shark with an expression just like Hawk's when he smiled; then filled in another hour or so browsing in second-hand bookshops.

The Demon and Hawk seemed remote, things of an uneasy dream; and, to tell the truth, if I hadn't remembered my favorite pipe was inside the piano, I think I should have let them remain remote. But a favorite pipe is a sacred thing, and not to be deserted, so I turned back, my only pause being to order a cold collation to be sent in.

Seven struck as I arrived. The collation must have preceded me, for I was in time to see a hand appear round our door, drop some coins into the landlady's paw, which she transferred to a youth from the ham and beef shop, who

waited on the doorstep. It struck me as I passed her that she wore a look of indignation, as if the food sent in was, in a way, a reflection on her tame cold lunch, but as it might have been grime, I took no notice.

The Demon leapt joyously to meet me, though of Hawk there was not a vestige. A grampus-like rumble from the direction of the piano, however, announced his whereabouts.

"Get out of here!" he roared. "This is the private room of a gentleman with a bad attack of the ditherums just about to commence."

I waited in silence to see what he would do next. After a pause a flushed face rose from behind the piano and cautiously looked about. When its eyes caught sight of me I had a vague impression of a whirling Dervish, and the next minute Hawk had me by the throat.

"What d'you mean by leaving me all this time?" he ground out, with a shake between each word that made every tooth in my head jump.

If the Demon had not then come to the rescue and pinned him by the calf, this tale would never have been written. Fortunately, he was forced to let go, and by the time he was ready again I was in possession of the poker, which daunted him. So he sank wrathfully into a chair, wrapped the counterpane round himself more securely, and balefully glared at me whilst he attacked the food on the table.

"You crass ass!" he mumbled, with a mouth full of ham, "do you know you've been gone for hours? And do you know I've had the dooce and all of a time here?" he went on, savagely rending a cold chicken.

"It started," he grumbled, "five minutes after you went. The landlady came and knocked at the door, so I pretended to be out. Yes, you may laugh, but how'd you like to receive cavalry in this rig-out? Well, when she got no answer (you see, I was busy climbing under the bed), she came in, and after her came a chap with a little brown bag. The latter puzzled me, until I grasped from their conversation he'd come to tune the piano, and, what's more, it seemed that

the bally musical box was on the installment system, for the fellow made a furious song about my clothes on it, and the pair of 'em had the cheek to throw the lot on the floor. The dust under that bed knocked railway carriages to pot; and I had to lie in it for a solid hour whilst he strung the jigger up to fighting pitch again. By the time he'd done I was fit to bust, especially as that dashed dog of yours kept dodging under the bed, and then pawed the man and whined as though he'd discovered a crime of some kind. Bothered if I know why you keep the brute," he said vindictively, and dipped his fork into the Demon instead of the chicken by way of emphasis.

"Well, when he'd gone (What are you choking over now? Anything funny?) I crawled out, with the idea of locking the door before anyone else came along to tune the rest of the things here. No key, of course! There was nothing for it but under the bed again; but before I retired there, out of bravado I hung my things up on the piano once more. I hadn't been there (not on the piano, you goat; under the bed, I mean) another two seconds before I heard a knock, at the front door this time. Mrs. Cod answered it, and after some jaw in the passage, blowed if she didn't come into our room again. 'These is the rooms,' she said, and in came an elderly party, female, dressed in the kind of rig worn by a girl of seventeen, and carrying a vanity bag. 'And 'ere's the bedroom,' went on the landlady. 'Well, fancy, the tooner's been and put them wet clothes back,' with which she flung my things on the floor again and went on. 'The gents has only took the rooms for a week, so you can 'ave 'em in five days.' 'Well,' says Lady Godiva, 'I think they'll do; but before I decide I should like my husband to see them. He won't be more than half an hour, so if you don't mind me waiting, he can decide when he calls.' The landlady, bless her! didn't mind. She said both the gents were out, and even if they weren't

An elderly female.

she felt sure they'd be proud. So she left the countess in the room and shut the door.

"Whew! She prowled round a bit, and looked at herself in the mirrors; then she opened her bag and brought out a powder-box and other paraphernalia, and started re-decorating. She had just touched up her eyebrows when the Demon grabbed her bag, and, as you no doubt may expect, skimmed under the bed with it. She saw him go and gave chase. 'Naughty doggy,' she said, 'give it up! If my husband saw what was in it, honeymooning though we are, he would despise me. So give it up, there's a good dog!' You bet he did. He hung on all the tighter, and he'd got just where I couldn't reach him too, round my back somewhere. After a bit the old girl got rattled, and began sweeping around with her parasol. You'd have yelled too if she got you in the eye like she did me. In fact, she gave me such a prod, I rolled out into the open day with the agony. And what do you think the dame did then? Scream? Not at all. She wagged a saucy finger at me, and said, 'Bad boy! Fancy hiding there! How romantic of you!'

"Just imagine my feelings, please. I wouldn't care if she'd yelled, but flirt in a counterpane with a raddled old crow of fifty! 'My dear madam,' I explained, 'I'm awfully sorry, but you see——' Bless you, she wouldn't take explanations. Made out I'd followed her and done it for a surprise. 'But do get back,' she said, 'whilst hubby's here, and I'll get rid of him as quickly as I can.' Ugh! Lord knows what would have happened next if at that moment old cockalorem himself hadn't come dotting in. Red-faced, cotton-wool mustache Johnny! Jerusalem! When he spotted me in this get-up, he left fly. It was obvious his better half was a giddy girl, for he raved about this being the fifth time he'd caught her in a fortnight. Then he turned his attention to me. He said he wouldn't put up with any more of it. (I didn't want him to.) This, he remarked, was her blanked reason for wanting to look for rooms herself, was it, so she could carry on more of her demmed flirting tricks she'd blank well caught

him with, eh? Well, he'd see what his solicitor said, and if the legal Johnny stated he might kill me, he'd do so and then get a divorce. I gave him a card, and said directly my clothes were dry I'd fight him with anything from fists to dynamite, and also defend any suit he brought against me. I told him it would only be necessary for the jury to see his wife's face to acquit me, but that the judge might order a commission in lunacy to consider my case, in that after having known her I couldn't be quite right. I kept on at the beggar till he went blue and speechless, and at last he dragged his blessed wife off by the wrist. He must have told Mrs. Bilge downstairs about it, for she came in soon after with her eyes shut, and said we must go in the morning, as she didn't want to lose her good name. So, take it all round, my time has been fully occupied."

"Well," I soothed, "we can easily get other rooms; but you were an ass to give him a card. Had it an address on it?"

"Yes, but that doesn't matter," said Hawk complacently. "I'm pretty wide, so he'll be serving a writ on the wrong chap if he goes on with the business. Ha ha!"

"Ha ha! Good!" I echoed. "Won't the owner of the card jump when old thingumy sets a lawyer on him."

"Yes, you will," was his casual reply as he prepared to turn in.

"I will?"

"So I anticipate," came from the bedroom. "It was your card."

Until the gray dawn I sat in that stuffy room in a broken arm-chair and a daze, several dazes, and revolved Hawk's latest iniquity in what remained of my mind. From the fact that the husband wore a cotton-wool mustache and said demme instead of bother, I argued Anglo-Indian liver and the worst. Life seemed a whirl that night. The only thing which stands out clearly is a picture of Moses in the Bulrushes (Moses pink with flyspots, bulrushes purple, Pharaoh's

daughter yellowy-green), which, framed in light maplewood and dust, hung askew over the mantel. I remember how it caught my eye every time I looked up, until I distinctly noticed that Moses wore a gloatful sneer, and so in fury slung a boot at the work of art, which put Moses clean out of play and wrecked Pharaoh's daughter's elegant nose forever. I recollect also that I trod on the broken glass when I retrieved the boot.

The morning saw Hawk's clothes dry, and that worthy himself in a great fume. It seemed the landlady's remarks had rankled, and from what I overheard when Hawk settled with her the bill rankled too. His heated voice sounded as injured as if he bore all our expenses himself, whereas I believe, beyond the fiver Uncle had given him and a little loose silver, the bulk of our joint money (what was left of it) had been provided by me.

He angrily banged the door behind us, and after he had deposited the bag in the left luggage office at the station, he declared his intention of having a bathe. "Do us both good," he snapped.

It was a beautiful day, and I felt batheful too. We engaged a double bathing cabin, wherein we were accompanied by the Demon. Somehow I began to like the pup. Although he had many faults, he had the virtue of steadfastly sticking by us, and there was no doubt he had upset Hawk more than once, a fact which softened me.

"Good dog, then," said Hawk, who stood on one leg in the manner of those who have not yet entered the water, whilst he flapped his arms around his airy bathing costume. "We'll leave him here to guard our clothes, so if anyone looks in whilst we're out he can get a bit of tooth practice in."

The water was not too wavy that morning, and suited my style of swimming excellently. I may say the secret of my graceful swanlike progress in the water is that I always keep one foot on the bottom. I find it steadies one, and gives a security you can attain in no other way. Hawk, however, was of the elect who do side-strokes, somersaults, and other

weird things, just like a shoal of porpoises, not to mention that he looked like one too.

After we had splashed about for a few minutes, I looked towards our cabin. The Demon had worked the door open, and with a starfish in his mouth now stood at the edge of the waves and looked pathetically out to sea. Hawk saw him too, and made urgent signals to him to go back to the cabin and remount guard. The Demon stood irresolute. He wanted to oblige Hawk, but couldn't make his signals out, which is not to be wondered at. It needed at least a troop of Boy Scouts to unravel them. Nevertheless, after a moment's indecision, the pup wagged his tail, turned back, and waddled into the cabin again.

"Sensible little beggar," chuckled Hawk, "he knew what I meant. Why, he's really—— Oh, Jerusalem!"

The latter expletive was occasioned by the reappearance of the Demon, who had Hawk's trousers in his mouth. He had made up his mind that Hawk felt cold out there in the water with hardly anything on, and he wasn't going to stand by and see a friend of his master catch a chill. So, despite Hawk's yells, he entered the sea, and swam gravely towards us, whilst Hawk's garments trailed on the surface on either side of him.

He swam gravely towards us.

Hawk raved and stormed to no purpose; but when the Demon saw his agitated form splash murderously towards him, he turned round and paddled energetically to land again. Hawk followed, and the Demon, who now knew what to expect if he was caught, dodged under a donkey, round a goat-chaise, and vanished with the trousers up the beach before their owner had done more than stub his toes on the shingle.

Weak with laughter—they were not my trousers—I joined Hawk at the door of our cabin, and dropped helpless on a seat.

"I've often read of chaps losing their bags when bathing, either by the aid of dogs or tramps," I chuckled. "Sometimes it is just after the things have gone that a keeper comes along and catches the chap trespassing; at other times an elderly female heaves in sight; and yet again they are purloined by some weary Willie, who a few days after adds insult to injury by asking the loser to buy them. I never saw anything so funny in my life."

"Didn't you?" asked Hawk grimly. "Then I'm sure you'll laugh all the more when I tell you all our money was in those trousers' pockets."

"What?" I shouted.

"Every blessed ha'penny, my humorous friend. You'll have to go and buy me another pair."

It just then occurred to me I only possessed one-and-six in the world.

CHAPTER XI

Is a trouser tragedy. Hawk has a Bath chair, and I have a hard time. Our dilemma at the station, and Hawk's flight from Cupid. The dog turns up with the garments, but not with our money. We set out to seek our fortune, and Hawk finds a convict, and spoils a cinematograph picture. We part, more in anger than sorrow.

THE loss of Hawk's nether garments now began to take on the appearance of a tragedy. Hawk began to "take on" too when he found that my sole funds were under two shillings, and the kind of trousers purchasable for that sum would not be the latest cut.

"I tell you what," I said triumphantly, "if we haven't got any money for the moment, we've got our watches and chains, and no doubt a friendly uncle will do the needful by them if you'll wait here whilst I dodge out."

"You're quite right, but it's a case of locking the horse after the stable has gone, for if you'll bring that colossal intellect of yours to bear on the question, you'll remember we put our valuables in the bag before we came on this childish paddling business."

"Well, that's easily settled," I remarked in cheerful tones, as I saved my own tokens of respectability from a sly and predatory snatch, "that's easily settled; give me the cloak-room ticket, and I'll jolly soon fetch the bag."

"The ticket is—or was—with our funds," said Hawk gloomily. "Why the dooce didn't you keep some of the money instead of making me hold the lot? Now we're in a pretty hole. Your dog's gone off with my things, which contained all that stood between us and starvation. The only thing to be done is this: you must get a Bath chair for me—hire it, we don't want a man—and drag me to the station. Perhaps the clerk will recognize me and allow me to

have the bag, whereas if you went your face would be enough to make him suspicious that you were on the bounce."

He had so worked himself up, I trembled at what he might do next. Collar my precious pair? Not if I knew it. So to prevent any sudden action on his part I walked off on a chair hunt.

It was fortunate that the boatman who the day before had remarked to me, "Never mind, sir, you'll be all the better for it," during a painful realization of what a choppy sea was like, had taken a fancy to me.

He waddled into my life again just as a misanthropic Bath chair-man had for the third time scornfully refused to part with his chair without a deposit based on twice its value, or alternatively the attendance of himself to see I didn't pocket the thing.

My boatman listened with a judicial cock of his head, and then took me aside and made the masonic sign of the British Policeman—a crooked hand held in casual fashion behind his back. I deposited a shilling therein, and the oracle worked—in other words, the boatman made explanatory noises in a husky whisper to the chair proprietor, the upshot of which was I became bailee of the chair at the rate of two shillings an hour.

Reader, have you ever attached yourself to a Bath chair? If so you will sympathize with me. Ju-jitsu is nothing to the fiendish tricks a chair can play when it's behind your back. It has a way of smiting you athwart the backbone which puts the Inquisition into the category of kindergarten games. To get the full measure of its juggernaut genius, you must, however, try it over cobblestones as I did. Some day I will write a book about Bath chairs, and spend the profits on founding a home for aged Bath chair-men. I feel for them. It harrows me too much to advert at length to that trip across the beach to the cabin, in which Hawk lay imprisoned out of deference to Mrs. Grundy. I will only remark that the chair had me down twice and frolicked over me, ran me up to my knees in the sea, stuck fast in the sand and came out

with disconcerting plops. Also if ever I meet certain donkey boys on a dark night, let them look to themselves, for nothing but blood will wipe out their words.

Bathing cabins, as you doubtless know, are wobbly structures built of canvas stretched on wooden frameworks. A little sliding door with a tendency to jib gives access to either end, and little boys with hatpins have been known to amuse themselves for hours by shrewdly probing the sides: every yell a player produces counts one, and a scream two.

I had several narrow escapes from opening the wrong cabin door, for I had forgotten the number, but at last located my companion in No. 10, that exhibited a frantic hand which beckoned through a hole in the canvas.

"Darn you!" skirled Hawk, whose voice sounded strangely muffled by the canvas, "have you been to make it? This shed proprietor has been round to demand extra money as I've stayed so long, and from the prevarications I've had to make, he has come to the conclusion I'm potty. Bring the chair round to the sea door, idiot, I don't want to be gaped at by the whole world."

I dutifully did as he desired. There was a bang as the cabin door crashed open, a glimpse of a striped pink shirt, and Hawk was in the chair, breathing instructions and maledictions in the same blare.

"Pull!" he gnashed, angered by a crowd of boys who, having seen the shirt, grinfully enjoyed the situation. The chair unfortunately, had its own views about moving. It refused to budge, despite the most furious jerks and tugs on my part, and then it dawned on me that the impetus it should have used to move forward with, it was adapting to a downward progress, for the beastly thing steadily sank into the sand, as though avowedly seeking the center of the earth, whilst Hawk's angry movements made it settle still deeper.

To say the least of it, my position was far from enviable. I was expected to move a heavy Bath chair, which contained a fat man dressed principally in a coat and waistcoat and swear words, whilst it was so fixed in the sand that nothing

under a gang of navvies with a steam crane could have shifted it. In fact, had it not been for a friendly soul assisted by a rope and a capstan, Hawk and his chair would have slowly sunk to those nether regions he in the fullness of time was booked for, which possibly might have been an excellent good thing.

In a dazed kind of way I at last realized that we were on the road to the station, and also it appeared to me that Hawk was silly to act like a boat-race cox. in his desire to urge me on, for each time he lunged forward the chair bashed me in the back, and when he flung backwards it pulled me over.

And when we did arrive at the cloakroom, his manner so upset the clerk that he wouldn't think of giving up our bag without the ticket. "The gentleman who left it was a gent," he remarked significantly.

Hawk also indulged in a few significant remarks, which ended in three porters and a ticket collector stepping into the breach and helping me to remove him before the clerk got his coat off.

"Run!" he yelled.

Baffled once more, I slowly towed him away, whilst he whispered so many things I wonder his throat was not permanently scorched; and then, without a word of warning, he leaned forward and thumped me between the shoulders.

"Run for your life!" he yelled.

With visions of Uncle Boscobel, Harker and Gibble in full pursuit, I obeyed. The chair rocked and swayed dizzily down the station slope, and got up a momentum which made me feel I should never be able to stop.

By adroit twists, however, I manœuvered the machine into a quiet street, and brought it to a standstill without more

damage than a broken spring and a lost tire. Whilst I mopped my face I demanded an explanation.

"Was it Uncle?" I asked.

"Uncle be blowed!" snorted Hawk. "It was that London landlady of mine. You remember I told you my fatal beauty had conquered her, don't you? There's been rice and old slippers in her eye for months, and I just caught sight of her as she came out of the station with a lot of day excursionists. If she'd caught me, and in this kind of minus dress—ugh!"

It struck me we were about on the brink of things—marooned in a seaside town with sixpence and one pair of trousers between us, and a Bath chair which had run up half a crown already and would cost at least ten shillings to tinker up. I seriously discussed with myself the advisability of deserting Hawk before he dragged me down to his level—to be a kind of centaur creature, half man and, until he got more dress, half Bath chair.

Just then a mild wuffle caused me to look about. A second wuffle came from under the chair, and the wuffler I perceived with joy was the Demon. The Demon, with Hawk's pearls of price still festooned from his mouth, somewhat bedraggled it is true, but undoubtedly trousers. How long he had been underneath the chair I know not, but shrewdly suspect ever since Hawk had got into it. That was the kind of thing the Demon reveled in: when you didn't want him he fawned upon you and made a nuisance of himself; when you did want him, you couldn't find the brute, yet he was there all the time. It may sound like a catch joke, "Where was the Demon when he wasn't?" but it is a truth.

The way in which Hawk overcame the difficulties of putting on the garments whilst still in the chair approached the marvelous, as did the way he emerged from the chair, which made one think he must have been seated on a pin-cushion or something equally soft.

Through force of circumstances, we had to leave that elderly Bath chair derelict, and neither of us spoke until we were a good mile away from it, and then Hawk, after a hasty

scuffle through the pockets of his newly-recovered breeks, announced the delightful fact that they were empty.

When I look back this does not seem remarkable, for not only had the Demon dragged them into the sea and over several square miles of beach, but he had trailed them under the chair whilst it careered from the station. The marvel is that there were any garments left at all; but at the moment the discovery floored us, for even the bag ticket had vanished.

"Well," said Hawk with a groan, "we must make the best of it. We can't return to Middewick until the mess you made of things has cooled down; we can't sell the Demon, for he is priceless in the sense that there is no coin small enough to express his market value; and we've got no money to go back to London with, even if it were any good to do so. You've done it this time, Dobbs. I felt something would happen if I left things to you. Now, unless we can find some buried treasure or—— Hst! look over there!"

I looked in the direction he pointed, and at first wondered drearily what there was in an ordinary hedge to hst! at, unless he had some fat-headed scheme of making a corner in bird's-nests. We had walked out of the town, and at the moment were in a narrow lane bordered by fields and coppices and one or two tramps. The hedge which interested Hawk lay on the left at right angles to the lane we honored by using, and I made out when I looked again the figure of a man who skulked along it, whose dress proclaimed him to be a guest of the State, a deviator from the narrow path, and one who leaned to arrow patterns on his raiment—in short, a convict. A little ahead, with her back towards him, stood a girl at the bend of the hedge. She was dressed in white, and her peroxide tresses glittered metallically in the sun, except where the hair had grown after the dye, and she played "He loves me, he loves me not" with a twig. To-

In short, a convict.

wards her the sinister criminal crept. No wonder Hawk forgot our parlous plight. His detective-soaked mind came to the boil and foamed, and he gripped me by the arm until I foamed and nearly boiled over into the bargain.

"Jingo! Escaped!" he muttered. "And the beggar means mischief too. The question is, shall we collar him before he touches the girl, or wait till he does and then rescue her, what? Wish I had my gun," he said in a regretful voice, although I privately believe he was rather glad, for fear he shot himself; "but never mind, two of us and the dog will be a match for him."

Much to my dismay, for I lean towards peace, he climbed the hurdled bank which separated us from the field of action, and dragged me after him, and the Demon, who scented a riotous scene after his own heart, gleefully snooped over too.

"Tackle his legs," commanded Hawk, "whilst I scrag him; but wait till he touches the girl."

"Why?"

"Why? If we tackle him before she sees him, how the deuce will she know we rescued her? We shouldn't get a thank you."

It was a nervy moment. There'd be quite a little surprise in store for that girl when we all arrived, especially if much fur flew.

Convict 99 crept along until he reached the corner where the girl stood, and as he did so Hawk, reluctantly backed up by me, gave a roar and landed on top of the fellow just as he touched the girl.

When the first shock of the impact was over, old Never-too-late-to-mend laid himself out to show his paces. He was a biggish man, in disgustingly good form too, and as Hawk was short and I was not tall, he shook us off our feet each time he reared. My position in the game—that of leg-keeper—saved me from his fists, which, as Hawk's hands were both engaged in the friendly occupation of strangling him, played round my friend's ribs like drumsticks, with dull thuds such as proceed from a carpet-beater's studio. From what I could

see of the girl, who came in view each time we swirled round, she was dumb with amazement; and as for the Demon, I never saw such a rotter for biting the wrong legs.

I was just about done up, and ready to apologize and be friends, when a terrier-like swing of Hawk's little body brought our quarry to earth. Strictly speaking, he fell on me, and Hawk fell on both; but after the mazy whirl we had trodden it was restful, and we all lay quiet and took the count before the next round, which didn't come off, for as we lay and gasped there dashed up two warders, a policeman, a cowlike yokel, and a typical *East Lynne* villain fellow. I naturally expected they would congratulate us, and let us share the reward and so on, but they didn't. They dragged Hawk off our prisoner; they pulled me from under him in no gentle way; they kicked the Demon to leg; and then the yokel Johnny tenderly assisted the convict to rise, whilst the taller of the two warders addressed himself to Hawk.

"What do you mean by spoiling the whole bally thing?" he demanded. "Who asked a pot-bellied little runt like you to interfere?"

"Wanted the credit yourself, what?" panted Hawk venomously. "That's like you blooming government officials. A public-spirited Englishman risks his life in the interests of the community, and you hirelings take the kudos."

"Credit? Credit be blowed!" stormed the warder. "Credit for what?"

"For collaring this blessed convict, of course!" roared Hawk, who flattered himself on his bullying propensities.

"Convict be hanged! You've spoiled one of the finest cinematograph pictures we've taken this week, you silly ass!"

"What!" stammered Hawk, as the light dawned on him, "are you playing for pictures?"

"Certainly," broke in the convict, "and I'd have made a picture of you in another minute if I could have got my breath," he added vindictively.

Hawk was about to reply, when the manager and photog-

rapher trailed up, and did not look so distressed at having the films spoiled as did the others.

"We got it all, and we can work the incident into a comic film which'll knock Foolshead into fits. I haven't seen a more realistic dust up in a long while. I suppose neither of you gentlemen are disengaged? because if you are I can fix you up. Money small but sure, easy work and plenty of excitement," blandly smiled the manager.

He was a man who evidently did not let the grass grow under his feet. He saw, came, and captured talent at once if he could, like the theatrical managers in novels.

Now I jumped at his offer. It was opportune, for our sole remaining sixpence would not carry us far; also I could comfortably grub along with these good people until such time as I learned that all was quiet along the Potomac at Middewick. So I closed with the manager's offer for self and Demon, and naturally expected Hawk would join us.

But when Hawk lost his temper he lost it utterly, and to find his convict was but a humble mummer, added to his smuggler and diver *fiascos*, flicked him on the raw. He fiercely declined, and commended the whole company to a Hades he described in detail with such opulence that Dante's Dream was, in comparison, an ideal place for school treats. He included the Demon and myself in his peroration, and declared his intention of never putting faith in man or dog again, which struck me as quite outside the point at issue. I did my best to dissuade him, but to no purpose. Go he would.

"We part here, Dobbs!" he blared. "You don't get me to play the goat for kids to laugh at in penny cinematograph palaces. I'll go my own way, and let you work out your own salvation."

He snorted, picked up his hat, glared inside it for a minute, stuck it on jauntily, and with a superb gesture of disdain which took in everyone present, stamped off. At the time I thought it useless to say any more, so let him go, and the Demon and I watched him as long as he was in sight, then turned and rejoined our fellow-players.

CHAPTER XII

Adverts to my life as a picture-actor. "Policeman Poddles' Pluck." The dog and the dummy. The manager's idea of a fall does not fall in with mine, so he and I fall out. The dog and I set out to face the world, and meet the celebrated Colonel Chugg. I join the Colonel's menagerie, and take up the mantle of an orang-outang.

I SPENT a most vigorous two months with that cinematograph company. Any reader conversant with picture shows, who has seen those films which depict some poor unfortunate fellow being chevied, thrown into ponds, blown up in mines, and bedaubed with every possible mixture from paint to puddles, will know what I went through without much description on my part.

The method of torture was simple. After we had bathed yesterday's wounds and fixed fresh bandages on the worst injuries, the manager marshalled us for the day's work. What he saw in me to make him give me what he called comedy parts, and which I refrain from saying what I called, I don't know, but if he decided on some such subject as "Spuffkins Takes Aunt Sally Shopping" his eye would single me out at once.

A strenuous two months.

"You look the part without make-up," he would chuckle. "Bless my soul, we'll get some laughs when the motor runs into you."

Some other victim would dress as Aunt Sally, and with the rest of the company made up as policemen, navvies, suffragettes, and other deep-sea fowl, we were placed in a motor and driven to the scene of agony. You know the regulation

plot. The funny man (he feels humorous, you may be sure) enters a shop and is thrown out by the shopman, then chased. He turns a corner and falls over a pail of whitewash, and the whitewasher joins the hunt, which runs through a gamut of falls, smashes, accidents and bruises, and culminates in a horse-pond, or bag of soot, or something equally uproarious. I was generally the funny man.

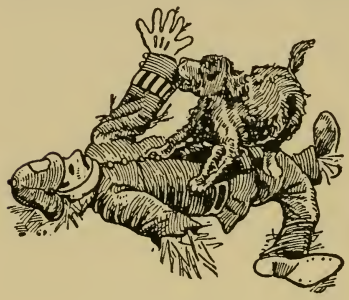
Mind you, if a very heroic picture were wanted, where the leading character has a really nice time, and spoons with a pretty maiden, then I was cast for the village idiot or a charwoman with a failing for drink.

And on the other hand, if anyone was needed to take a dangerous leap from a runaway carriage in full flight, it was, "Dobbs, you'll do this. When Bill" (Bill was the camera man) "shouts 'Go,' you jump like blazes, and, by the way, mind the mare don't kick you when you fall, she's got a nasty trick of it."

But it was "Policeman Poddles' Pluck" that really finished me. The idea was that Poddles (I was Poddles), the village boy in blue, had long been the butt of the villagers. (You can fill in the usual by-play here—Poddles in the Pond, Poddles on the Wasps' Nest, Poddles plopped into the Pigsty, etc.). One day the new Squire reports a burglary at the Manor House, and Poddles is sent to investigate. The Squire's little daughter (played by the manager's wife) and her mother (manager's daughter) are in the park as he approaches, being terrorized by a tramp. Poddles comes to the rescue; tramp fires a pistol, and dashes off. Poddles, wounded, follows, and the tramp flies in the direction of the old quarry. Poddles catches him, and there is a furious struggle, in which the policeman is flung over the brink, thirty feet down. Yet, although he has sustained several broken legs and arms, he draws his revolver, pots the tramp who gloats down at him, and kills him. The dead tramp pitches into the quarry too; the wounded policeman searches the body, and reveals the fact that the tramp was the burglar.

You can see that Poddles has a giddy old time of it. Of

course, in the usual way a dummy is substituted for an actor when a long fall is desired. The camera is stopped whilst this is done, and stopped again when the actor takes the dummy's place at the bottom of the fall. But when we'd got as far as the struggle, and the camera had stopped ready for the substitution, we found the dummy had been chawed to bits by the Demon, whom we had left in the car with it. A mess of straw in a battered helmet and one sleeve would be inconclusive as a faller, and the Demon had made such a thorough job of it there was no fixing up the dummy again.



P. C. Poddles.

So the manager said to me in a cooing voice—

"Well, dear boy, there's only one thing to be done—you must chance it."

"Chance what?"

"Why, the jump! It's nothing much, after all. What's a few feet to a strong athletic chap like you, old man? Why, I'd do it myself. I've jumped twice that distance when I was a boy, and regarded it as nothing."

I pointed out that whilst a thirty-foot drop might have been nothing to him as a boy, it was a precious lot to me as a grown-up, and I begged to decline.

I didn't say it quite so politely as that, but my statement was final and terse. This put him in a rage. He said he wouldn't employ a milksop fool who was afraid of a piffling little fall like that; and then I made a further remark, and he added a few more, and the upshot of the business was that Policeman Poddles, so far as I was concerned, ceased to exist; and I took my salary to date, threw off the husk of the policeman, donned my ordinary attire, which was fortunately in the car, and very far from silently stole away with the Demon in attendance.

As my dog and I strolled through interminable country lanes I reviewed my position. I was quite in the dark about Middewick affairs, and liked me not to return there until I knew how the cat jumped, or rather when I was sure the cat was dead and forgotten—the cat being a poetic allusion to things generally.

It was necessary to live, and as most of my cinematograph salary had gone in arnica and court plaster, my savings were small, so a job of sorts was imperative. In the meantime there was an adventurousness, a freedom, about a nomadic life which appealed to me.

Soon there came in my purview a largish tent flanked by a smaller one and a caravan, and I was aware of a subtle aroma of sawdust and oranges, animals and hay, which reminded me of the time when a circus was an earthly paradise and every clown an angel. But this tent hardly looked big enough for a circus, so I turned for information to a poster on a near-by fence, which, as it contained every color in the rainbow and a few odd dozen besides, had already dazzled me even when I only saw it from the tail of my eye. This informed me that the tent contained

"Colonel (U. S. A.) Patrick K. Chugg's
Colossal Menageric Aggregation, which Staggers the
World."

And the program included a remark in red type about "Durbar, the Man-eater," which gave one a pleasant thrill, and promised novelty, when another item of the program, "Demonstrations of Life in the Jungle," came on.

When I had read all there was to read and admired the picture of the Colonel, which occupied pride of place on the bill, and mentally remarked that if the Colonel looked like it then he was worth the admission fee alone, I turned round and nearly fell over a large person who was intently examining the Demon. He (the person, not the Demon) was a veritable mountain of a man, with one of those cherubic faces arranged on the square acre system. He wore a fierce

black mustache with its ends waxed upwards to within a hair's-breadth of his eyes, one of which rotated genially to make up for the fixed appearance of the other. He wore a low-crowned, wide-brimmed, top hat, a frock-coat with ample skirts, black trousers, and a green waistcoat with yellow spots on it. His fat fingers were bedizened with some eight signet rings and a large diamond one, which must have cost at least half a crown.

This iridescent party grinned cheerily at me, and with a jerk of his thumb at the poster, said in a fat voice—

"Don't ye belave it, son."

"Believe it?" I asked, wondering if he meant the whole poster or only the mention of the man-eater.

"Yep. That tintype av me ain't me, savvy? Y'see, I'd kinder mislaid the picture block av me own face, so I put in poor old Obadiah's f'r the time bein'."

He twirled one side of his mustache and blew comfortably. This was evidently the Colonel. But Obadiah?

"Eddicated Rang-utang, Obadiah, he was," said the Colonel, in answer to my unspoken question, "and wint and died on me hands awhile ago. He put me up against it, did poor old Obadiah, but I had his skin preserved and made do wid a little feller who it fitted; and now darned if he hasn't gone and run away wid the lady who used to do stunts wid me wolves, so you bet your life I'm worried, for I niver like to disappoint th' public." He cocked a ruminative eye at me. "Say, are ye walkin' the track?"

The lady of the wolves.

"Am I which?"

"Lookin' f'r a job? If you've got no desprit wurrk t' hold down, why not try Obadiah? Ye're about hissize, an' there's nothin' much to do—set in a cage an' rastle round an' ballyhoo now an' again. I'm an asy bhoy to wurrk for too."

Why not? The Colonel seemed a kindly soul, and I might as well do this as anything else. But I should feel lonely

caged by myself, so I asked if he would have any objection to the dog sharing my captivity.

"Niver in the wide wurrld, son," chuckled the Colonel, as he extended a square foot of fat hand and pump-handled my arm. "Not a little bit. Hav'm in the cage wid yez, it'll draw th' people. 'Tis not often they git a chanst to see a Rang-utang wid his pet pup around. Say, I'll give yez five dollars a week, an' find yez in grub an' lodgin'. Are ye on?"

I intimated that I was on, at which the Colonel breezily took me by the arm and led me towards his establishment, and explained as he did so that his horses, which pulled the wagons, were stabled in the adjoining village, "for," said he, "if I hobble 'em around the show it's a sure thing they either git stolen, or some boy comes along an' pushes them over," from which I concluded they were not in their first youth.

We entered the smaller of the two tents, which was tastefully furnished with three large wicker baskets, sundry clothes in untidy heaps, a profusion of old newspapers, a small cracked looking-glass, and a dubious black bottle.

"Here we are," smiled the Colonel, as he dived into the largest of the baskets, "an' here's poor old Obadiah's skin," dragging out a moth-eaten, much-stitched skin with many bald patches, and a property monkey's head of repulsive ugliness.

When I saw the skin I commended Obadiah for his shuffle off this mortal coil. If I had to always look like that poor creature must have done, nothing but death would sooth my grief.

"Obadiah didn't run much to fur, he didn't," said the Colonel in a regretful voice, "although I tried most evrythin' on the market, and made him up a hair raiser mesilf. Whether when I rubbed the stuff on I rubbed the fur off, I dunno, but he got balder wid ivry bottle. Thry him on, son; ye'll find him as comfortable as a motor coat."

All I can say is that if such was the case, motor coats are by no means comfortable, for the skin fitted tight where it shouldn't and bagged disgracefully at the knees.

Whilst I struggled into it the Colonel applied himself to the bottle, and when he had kindly assisted me to put on the head, he led me into the menagerie portion of the show. The Menageric Aggregation, I noticed, hardly came up to the enthusiastic remarks on the poster.

There were six cages standing round the tent, one of which was empty; another contained an unhappy happy family, chiefly made up of monkeys and a pig; another, two wolves suspiciously like sheep-dogs—these were labelled "Dangerous, Direct from Siberia"; yet another, a placid and bemanged bear; a fifth was partitioned, from one side a small Hindoo cow gazed pathetically up at a notice board hung outside her cage, which somewhat erroneously referred to her as "The Sacred Buffalo from Siam"; whilst in the other two weird birds utterly belied the statement that they were the "Only Living Extinct Birds of Paradise."

The interior of the sixth and last cage was hidden by a large canvas curtain, on which was painted a very yellow tiger on a purple ground, gracefully embellished with blood-red letters to the effect that here lived Durbar, the far-famed man-eater, who, it would seem, had quite an army to the credit of his digestion.

A platform ran along the front of this cage and the empty one which stood next to it, and up the wobbly steps leading to it the Colonel guided me by the late Obadiah's arm, opened the door of the empty cage, and bowed me in. The Demon joined me, and when the Colonel had carefully shut the door, he said—

"It won't be long before the show opens. I'll start her up directly I've had a bite to eat, and in the meantime, so long as you don't set the straw alight, ye may smoke. Here's a ceegar. Feedin' time is after the performance, an' say, you mustn't mind eatin' in public."

As I was fairly hungry, I answered—

"Not at all. What did you feed Obadiah on, as a general rule?"

"Well, he used to have fruit, but that wasn't in public, for

it disappointed the people who like to see animals atin' raw meat; an' I belave that's what the poor thing died of. Sort of upset his engines, him bein' a vegitarian guy."

"You surely don't expect me to eat raw meat, do you, Colonel?" I asked anxiously.

"No, no, son; you need only pritind. No need to swaller it at all," he said as he swaggered off.

I began to feel depressed, then bored. The Colonel had thoughtlessly locked the door, or I might have been tempted to stroll round to liven the monotony.

The Demon and the sheep-dog wolves kept up a nerve-shattering bark; the bear and the monkeys rasped busily, and grunted and squeaked as the spirit and little tormentors moved them; the birds of paradise clucked dismally; but from Durbar's cage came no sound save a steady snore. The monarch of the jungle reposed. It was a miserable hole, that menagerie. I began to wish myself out of it; for though the Colonel had given me a cigar, I had no matches, and Obadiah's skin was sufficiently aromatic to make me wish for some way of fumigating my immediate neighborhood.

When the Colonel returned I quite cheered up, for to hear a human voice after so much animal noise was a delight. He explained, as he swept things up a bit, that he would expect me to do a little work besides Obadiahing, as his staff was much reduced by the elopement of the former tenant of Obadiah's skin and the lady of the wolves, and his two remaining helpers were in durance vile through mistaking the landlord of the last public-house they called at for an escaped elephant.

"But we'll manage," he said confidently, as he lit a large naphtha flare to lighten the gloom of the tent. "Whin ye see the people come in, rip around a bit an' rattle the bars. If ye know any German or Roosian, cuss a bit in it. Nixt to Eyetalian it's most like Obadiah's talk as anythin'. An' now to begin."

He then strode off, and I heard his voice, muffled by the tent side, urgently implore an unseen crowd to step up and

pass in. He told them it was a duty to their future grandchildren to see the Menageric Aggregation, for no such sight would ever meet their eyes again; wherein, if he referred to me, he spoke undiluted truth.

In another few minutes the audience began to straggle in and gradually filled the tent; and when he had poked his head round the entrance to satisfy himself there was no more room, the Colonel strode in too, and forced his way to the platform, at which I distrustfully vented my first howl.

CHAPTER XIII

Refers to Colonel Chugg's Aggregation. Durbar, the man-eater, and demonstrations of life in the jungle. The dog re-discovers Hawk, and escapes with a bear. Hawk's news, and the robbery in the dressing-tent.

THE Colonel, having achieved the platform, possessed himself of a long wand and turned to the crowd, whom he beamed on as cheerfully as does a solicitor on a rich client, or a suffragette on the brick which hits the right minister.

"Ladies an' Gints," he commenced, with rich unction and a comprehensive wave of the wand, "with your kind permission I'll have plisure in inthrojucin' to your notice me wurrlld-famed Menageric Aggregation av savig dinizins av th' forest, th' jungle, an' the ripsnortin' boundin' pampas. The colliction cost me thousands av dollars to bring together, an' the rason there's not many lift is thot the Zooligicil Sassiety av the United States racently insisted on buyin' some av the lesser vallible wans, lavin' me howiver, the crame av the lot to show yez."

He strode to the end of the platform and embraced the ripsnorters in the opposite cages with a sweep of the wand.

"Over beyant, in the fur corner, ye'll obsarve the Sacred Buffalo from Siam which the hathen Chinese ses their prayers to; an' nixt to um is the only two remainin' extinct birds av paradise, hatched in this menagerie an' foster-mothered by a chimpanzee. Passin' to the lift, ye'll notice the bar, which I caught in the Rockies av Arizona wid me frind an' fellercolonel Buffalo Bill, th' famous Boy Scout. Thot bar, ladies and gints, is legitimately assoomed to be th' last ov the cilibrated three bars av histhry, the other two havin' been shot by Prisidint Roosevilt. Foreninst the bar, ye'll observe two spicimins av Siberian wolves captured by me whin suppressin' Nihilism on behalf av me frind the Tsar. They uset ter do stunts," he added bitterly, "but th' princess as

wrastled wid um has skiddoed racent wid a dago. But no matther. The monks an' pig an' goat in the nixt cage were the original animals from which Profissor Darwin made his observations on the Theory av wan man wan vote; an' now, havin' exhausted the smaller reptiles, I'll be afther showin' yez the jools av me colliction. This——"

He turned and jabbed me in the ribs with most unnecessary force, which made me roar to such an extent that if the audience had gone home then they would have had twice their money's worth.

—"This is Obadiah, ladies and gints. Obadiah, as ye plainly see, is an anthropoid ape, his father bein' a gorilla, an' his mother a chimp, hence the Japanese name Rangutan. He was caught as a baby through the agency av wireless telegraphy, havin' got mixed up wid a message sint across th' jungle to say that the Sultan av Turkey was detained at the office, an' wouldn't be home till late, an' he is the livin' image av th' original prehistoric early Britons. He ates upwards av a ton av hay a day, an' it costs fifty pounds to give um a bath—no, I'm wrong, I was thinking av a elephant I sold lately. But no matther. The pup ye see wid um was given to Obadiah by a leading Mormon on account of Oby's likeness to the gintleman's seventh ma-in-law, an' it is a fine specimin av a Arctic fox-terrier. Before goin' any further, is there any lady 'd like to kiss Oby? No?"

Here he walked along to the tiger's cage and rolled up the canvas blind.

Now my cage adjoined the man-eater's, so try how I might I couldn't see into its interior. I squeezed against the bars of my prison in a way that greatly damaged Obadiah's skin, but to no use. I could see nothing of the tiger, who directly his curtain was moved made most untigerly noises. The Colonel, with an impartiality which did him credit, prodded him as hard as he did me, and after the effect had died down remarked impressively—

"Before yez, ladies an' gints, ye see Durbar, the furiosest tiger in captivity, so called to commimorate the fact that he

ate three troopers an' two civilians on the occasion of the last royal visit to India. He also killed a missionary an' ten natives, but he didn't eat them. The rajah who owned him found the rilatives av the deceased fancied he was in the insurance line, an' paid out in full for accidents, so to privint bein' ruined he gave the brute to me to show to the public as a warnin' against strong drink. In captivity his food has bin principally farinacious, as I found human bein's come ixpinsive."

A voice from the crowd murmured, and the Colonel frowned.

"If any wan don't belave me wurrd, shall I let um out f'r yez to see if he's a man-ater or not?"

There were no takers.

"Whilst ye drink in the splindid sight av these two noble craturs, th' orchestra will give a siliction," announced the Colonel, as he fished out a hand organ from under a tarpaulin and gave it a preliminary grind that made Durbar and myself growl in good earnest.

It is not impossible that the orchestra was at one time all right, and I don't want to appear prejudiced, but it had got the jimb-jambs in its old age, and its three tunes had got hopelessly mixed.

"Good-bye for Ever," "Killarney" and "Pop Goes the Weasel," well stirred together give a curious effect, something like the noise a little boy makes after a good meal of green apples.

The Colonel paused after his labors as conductor to see if an encore was desired, and when he found it was not, he again addressed the meeting.

"Owin to the Princess havin' vamoosed," he said regretfully, "the Dimonstrations av Life in the Jungle can't be showed ye so far as the wolves is consarned, but disappoint the public I nivir will. Ye've paid ye're money to see jungle dimonstrations, an' it's up to me to provide um. I therefore propose to turn Obadiah into Durbar's cage to show yez how, in their natral state, these ancient giants av th' wind-swept

prairies av th' African swamps conduct themsilves in the prisince av their inimies."

Was the man mad? He looked cool enough, diabolically cool and comfortable. Perhaps it was a joke? Anyway, man-eater or not, no tiger should be introduced to me. Probably the real Obadiah's demise was due to this very thing, and yet sooner than disappoint his beastly audience the infernal Colonel would sacrifice me, and had me in mind all along.

I quite understood the elopement of the last tenant of the skin. Even a princess who did stunts in a wolf's den was better company than a tiger.

The Colonel had his back turned to me whilst he wrung an overture to the combat from that Wagnerian organ, so I approached the bars and under cover of a howl and "Good-bye for Ever" fiercely asked what he meant by it.

"Don't ye worry, me son," he said without turning his head, and ground on turgidly. "The baste's got no tathe to spake av, an' no pluck. Directly ye get in hit him a kick—he'll be as afraid of yez as ye are av him."

"I refuse to go in," I stormed. "I'll give this Obadiah game away first."

"The lasht little feller," sang the Colonel to the tune of "Killarney," "thot wint an' gave th' Obadiah game away got chawed up by the crowd, an' died a inglorious, many-pieced death."

I thought rapidly. I had a recollection of reading how a crowd treated a show adjunct when they found it was false to its colors, and I felt that after all the tiger alternative would be preferable.

Anyhow, I had the Demon, who would be useful to draw his fire.

"Ye'll find a broth av a stick up in the corner," chanted the Colonel. "It's what I used to soothe Obadiah wid when he got obstropolous, an' it 'll kape the tiger busy if yez use it properly."

The overture came to an end, and though he still retained the organ to play an appropriate accompaniment to my

death scene or the tiger's, the worthy Chugg freed his hands and grasped a crank which stuck out between the cages. He energetically twiddled this round, and to my horror the partition which divided my lair from Durbar's moved upwards, creakily but surely, disclosing the half dark interior, at the end of which I discerned a dim yellow shape.

After the partition had risen, the Colonel gave an introductory wave of his fin-like hand, and "Durbar from India—Obadiah from Borneo," said he, for all the world like a boxing M. C. introducing two pugilists—Tricky Tibbs from Tilbury and 'Appy Alf from 'Anley. He then turned his attention to screwing those mangled tunes over again to hide any groans I might make as I was man-eaten.

For a tiger Durbar was a feeble specimen, and about as sick looking as a Boulogne tripper. He sat crouched in the corner of his cage as one who desired above all to attract no attention, a state of affairs that considerably emboldened me.

No half measures were possible. If I didn't terrorize him first he'd think I was just a new kind of dish, and tuck his serviette into his collar and wire in before I'd time to breath one final malediction on the complacent Chugg. So I began to thrash about, prance, howl and gibber like a mad medicine man. As I snarled and tore about I noticed that the Demon commenced to snuffle round my antagonist in a strangely friendly way, and more remarkable still, the tiger eyed the dog with an expression akin to bewilderment. After a survey of the Demon, he cast a baleful glare at me, and shuffled over to where I cavorted. He came, too, in such a cold-blooded way that my prancefulness deserted me, and I shrank against the bars of the cage in clammy despair. I realized that when hunters wrote of the mesmeric quality of a tiger's eye they knew what they were talking about. It was more than mesmeric—it was the quintessence of mesmerism, hypnotism and electrobiology all rolled into one, and concentrated to the *n*th

power. My heart came into my throat, and left a vacuum behind it which felt like that caused by one's first cigar. Outside the crowd waited expectantly, and the Colonel droned away at "Good-bye for Ever" in a horribly suggestive way, whilst he actually shook with suppressed laughter at some fiendish secret joke.

Nearer came that brute of a tiger, and stopped a bare yard away. My arms, protected by Obadiah's hide, though they were, hung nerveless beside me, and pathetic thoughts of dear Uncle Boscobel and my old home crashed through my mind like coals down a cellar shoot.

Durbar slowly reared on his hind legs, gave another glance at the Demon, who danced round him as though tigers were every-day events in his life, and then fetched me a bang on the ear with his paw which toppled me over and broke a tooth. Not satisfied with this extraordinary attack, he leapt on my agonized form and lowered his hideous jaws to my ear.

Things swam. The audience, the cage, the Colonel and the tiger mixed themselves up and danced before me like motes in a sunbeam. I shut my eyes and waited for the crush of those cruel jaws. I was so far gone, that when his whiskers tickled my ear I didn't ever shudder.

And then, when his wicked jaws touched my face, a voice came out of them and—

"So it's you!" snarled the tiger.

My state of mind was such, however, that even then I did not realize that tigers do not usually speak.

"Y—Yes, it's me!" I groaned. "You're mistaken in imagining I am a monkey. I'm a human sacrifice to Irish-American pushfulness. If——"

"You," went on the tiger, "and your beastly dog, what?"

It was Hawk!

Hawk masquerading as a Bengal man-eater. If the

Colonel foisted one man on the public as an educated ape, it was of course quite on the cards he should fake another up as a tiger; but to think I had been reduced to blank terror by Hawk in whatever guise, vulgarly speaking made me lose my wool.

Bravery returned like a flash, and the crowd, who were not in the secret, cheered rapturously as I upper-cut the fearsome Durbar and bashed him across the cage. The second round was mine by virtue of Obadiah's stick, and the third and fourth were about equal. How long the Demonstration of Life in the Jungle would have lasted is indefinite, for just as I had Durbar's head in chancery, and had smitten him well and truly in the left eye, the Demon created a diversion. With a peaceful desire to avoid the strenuous life in our cage, that sensible dog had squashed through the bars and taken a stroll round the menagerie, and finally insinuated himself into the bear's den.

The bear mistook him for one of his long-lost clan, and took the dog to his affectionate chest in one comprehensive hug which sent the breath out of the poor brute with a noise like an engine whistle.

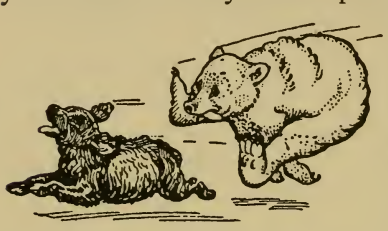
The audience, fickle as all audiences, promptly turned its back on the jungle demonstration, and surged round the bear's cage, whilst the excited Chugg endeavored to reach the animal with the wrenched-off handle of the organ. This he failed to do, so with a creditable bravery he opened the cage door and smote Bruin upon the nose with such effect that in order to see who was letting off fireworks the bear dropped the Demon.

That canine animal gave one gasp, sprang out of the cage, and vanished into the crowd. The bear, who still yearned for company, and wasn't going to lose his dear little play-

mate so quickly if he could help it, scattood between the Colonel's legs, clumsily flopped to the ground, gathered himself together, and lit out after the Demon.

The crowd gave a united yell and made way for him. Hawk and I, who had stopped our fight to watch what was toward, saw the Colonel rise from the floor of the cage and puff, rather than address, the audience in the following words—

"Ladies and gints, this closes the performance, thankin' you one and all for your kind patronage. If I cotch the bar



in time to git back, there'll be an avenin' show, whin the animals will be fed. If not, the doors will be open tomorrow, at the usual time. Children half-price"—this was as he descended from the cage—"an' schools at redooced fees," with which valediction he galloped out of the entrance in search of his pet, followed by the now feverish audience in one solid mass, they no doubt feeling braver thus than if they met the bear suddenly in single dalliance.

As the last one left the tent, Hawk removed his tiger head and looked at me indignantly. It was part of his character to always labor under some grievance, so I disregarded the look.

"Well, your bally dog's gone at last," he said. "Where have you been, what? I've been wanting to see you all this week, and so, of course, you've pig-headedly kept out of the way."

"I've been with those picture people. How did I know where you were, if it comes to that? And how did you get mixed up with Chugg?"

"Same way as you, I suppose. Only joined him yesterday. I've been knocking round with a mesmerist chap. Had a row with him because I got sick of having pins stuck in me to

show I was in a trance, so after I'd refused to come round when he'd 'fluenced me into a mad dog until I'd bitten every darned person in the audience, and him too, I left. Met the Colonel next day, and took this job in the hopes that, as we moved from town to town, I should run into you. I suppose you know your Uncle's dead?"

"Uncle Boscobel dead?" I shouted.

"Yes. Oh, it was nothing to do with us, so don't get alarmed. He must have got over your little joke, for he went to a place where there's no demand for Pectoral Pellets through laying a foundation-stone for some new Turkish baths, and through some slight error the foundation-stone lay on him. *Sic transit*, what?"

"How did you learn this?"

"Never mind how. They've been advertising for you. Come into the dressing-tent and I'll show you the advertisement."

I dashed to the cage door in my eagerness to get out, only to find it locked. Hawk, however, pulled up a trap-door in the floor and scrambled through, and I followed. We squirmed out amongst the wheels, and found our way to the tent in which I first donned Obadiah's skin.

The tent's appearance was very different to when I last was there. Every garment had flown. The baskets were heaped in the center empty, and the black bottle stood derisively on top of them. A large rent in the side of the canvas gave a distant view of a man struggling with a horse, and also showed how the disturber of the place had entered.

Hawk was digging amongst a heap of papers in the corner, to which he had rushed immediately we came in, and the full force of the empty tent's aspect had not struck him. He rose at last with a copy of *The Times* in his paw, and as I grabbed it from him he gave vent to a dismal whistle.

"Every blessed rag of clothing has been stolen!" he howled in frantic tones.

CHAPTER XIV

Shows how I was advertised for. The Colonel returns from a bear hunt with the Equine Marvel. He refuses to let me leave the show. The evening performance and supper. The Colonel's cookery. Hawk's scheme for flight, and how the Equine Marvel came in handy. We start.

THE advertisement ran to this effect:—

"*Re* Arthur Bucephalus Boscobel, deceased, of Pectoral Villa, Middewick, in the County of Umphshire, Patent Medicine Proprietor.

"If Arthur Dobbs, nephew of the above, who was last heard of in Middewick, will communicate with the undersigned before September the 5th next, he will hear of something to his advantage. Any person who can give information as to the said Arthur Dobbs' whereabouts will be suitably rewarded.

"Upottery, Son and Upottery, Solicitors and Commissioners for Oaths, Henrietta Street, London, W. C."

Poor old Uncle! And we had parted in anger. Well, it was good to think his departure for a better land had not been hastened by us. Pity we hadn't been reconciled before the stone fell on him, but it was not to be. It was unnecessary to ask how Hawk had learned of his death. No doubt he had been in communication with the lawyers on the reward question.

"Something to my advantage. Umph! Phew! And it's September the 4th now!" I exclaimed aloud.

"No clothes, no nothing! Only a bally tiger's skin and a fool dressed up as an ape!" wailed Hawk.

"I must go at once," I decided, as I got up with unwonted energy.

Hawk still bemoaned the loss of his paltry wardrobe instead of congratulating me. From the way he spoke, anyone would think I'd taken his blessed rags. What were hundreds

of Hawks' and Chuggs' losses to the fact, the printed and indubitable fact, backed by the whole weight of *The Times*, that the said Arthur Dobbs would hear of something to his advantage? The sale of Uncle's pellets had run into thousands of pounds annually, and as I knew what they were made of, I estimated that most had been sheer profit.

"Shut up!" I snapped at Hawk. "Have you got a time-table? Where's the nearest station? Stop that row and help, you selfish brute! I must go to town at once."

"What, in that rig-up?" sneered Hawk. "Haven't I been telling you every dashed rag in the place has gone, vanished, popped off, what?"

"Not my things as well?" I gasped, as I suddenly realized that what I then wore belonged to the executors of the late Obadiah.

"Of course; but don't let that stop you. You light out for the lawyers as you are. They'll double the whatever it is when they see you, for you look a jolly sight better with a mask on than off."

I looked blank, and as I did not answer he mounted a grievance and started on another track.

"Just my luck! Do I hear of anything to my advantage? Certainly not. Here have I brought you triumphantly through your troubles to where a legacy awaits you, and what do you say, 'Hawk, old boy, we share equally'? No. You get up and ramp and demand time-tables and stations as though I carried 'em about with me. Piggish! That's the only word for it, fairly hoggish."

"If you can see a way out of it I'll deal fairly by you," I said; "but it looks to me that I shall not be able to get anywhere, let alone London, in my present state, if all my clothes and money are gone."

"And mine and the Colonel's," added Hawk. "He kept all his takings in his hamper, and he'll be as broke as we are. We'd better see what he thinks about it. He'll be back soon."

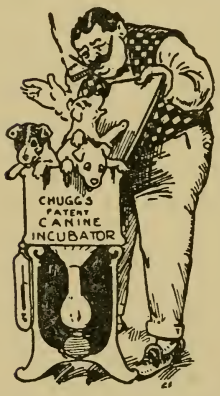
As he spoke we heard a tremendous plunge in the menagerie tent, and reached it in time to see the Colonel, in a

very heated and damaged condition, frantically tugging at the halter of an old, wall-eyed, piebald horse, who tugged whole-heartedly in the opposite direction, and would have dragged the Colonel out of the tent again had he not with great strategy suddenly let go the rope. This action resulted in two things—the piebald horse with a surprised look on his face fell backwards, and the Good Chugg had him down in true cowboy style before he could recover his equilibrium, and sat on his head. Then he saw us and waved a cheery hand.

"Say, bhoys, that bar surely had me hands down. Niver the smell av um did I see, so I'm afraid he's gone for keeps. But disappoint the public I'll not, so I've dragged wan av the van horses back to take the place av him. He'll do f'r the cilibrated talkin' Equine Marvel, for I uset to be by way av a ventriloquist, so thot's all right. Anythin' doin'?" he asked.

"The dressing-tent's been robbed!" blurted Hawk. "Someone must have broken in whilst the show was on, and they've cleared it—our clothes, every mortal thing."

"What? Not the baskits too?" shouted the Colonel, who was so taken off his guard he left his seat on the horse's head, and had it not been for Hawk's timely grab the Equine Marvel would have followed the bear.



The Colonel flung me aside and dashed out into the smaller tent, uttered a wild howl, and flew back muttering, "The caravan! The caravan!" towards which he ran. Another howl advised us that the local Raffles had seen to details.

In a minute or so, during which time we anchored the horse to the center pole of the tent, he returned and sat down limply.

"Howly saints!" he whispered. "Ivery lasht thing's went—the takins, me clothes, an' me incubator."

"Incubator?" I asked.

"Me incubator wot was goin' to make me fortun'. 'Twas this way. I'd reckoned a incubator 'll hatch eggs into chicks and warm chicks into roosters. Now ye know the throuble av rearin' pups. 'Tis a long time it takes. So I invinted a Canine Incubator to bring 'em on. All ye had to do was to put the day-old pups in an' light the lamp. They came on a month a week accordin' to my calculations, an' I was hopin' to ixpirimint on your pup too. Thot's why I took ye on principally, son. An' now the machine's gone, the pup's gone, an' every blamed other thing. Nawthin' but the show left an' a bill for fodder's long as your arm."

It was bad for the Colonel, but it was worse for me. I had hoped to obtain from him the means to pay a flying visit to town, and now unless he consented to lend me his own clothes and I could walk it that was impossible.

I argued that if the advertisement stipulated a certain date by which I was to appear, there must be some clause in Uncle's will which, failing my appearance, left the legacy to some blessed society. Therefore, at all costs, go I must. I was sorry for the Colonel, but I had my own griefs.

"Look here, Colonel Chugg," I said, as I thrust *The Times* before his eyes, "see this advert.? Well, I'm the man they want. I absolutely must go to London at once. I don't trust the post in affairs like this, and although I'm sorry if it puts you out, I'm off."

Chugg gazed at *The Times* and dropped a dingy tear on it.

"Gone, the wan an' only Canine Incubator, th' invintion av the cilibrated Colonel P. K. Chugg, U. S. A. An' it's went. Ochone!"

"So you said before," I remarked testily. I was a bit of an inventor myself, as you know, and with professional pride scorned any invention not turned out by myself. "So you said before. I repeat, I must go to London; and as I've lost all my money and clothes through fooling the public on your account, I insist on you providing me with the necessary means, see?"

"Go to London?" rasped the Colonel, who suddenly awoke from his sorrow and fixed me with his revolving eye. "Go to London? An' disappoint the public? Not on your life. Besides, what'll ye go in? Y'can't go in Obadiah's skin, an' niver a nickel have I got. An', begob, the show's busted enough widout me blamed eddicated Rangitang quittin! No, play fair, son. It can't be did, an' there's an' end av it. I've three days in this place yit, an' if ye put up a fight like ye did to-day" (he chuckled through his tears) "it'll draw the hull country. I couldn't spare yez if 'twas ever so."

To say I was angry would be a feeble statement. I boiled, fumed, inwardly exploded as I shouted back—

"Ah, it becomes you to talk of fair play! You engaged me under false pretenses. You never let on you intended to turn me into a tiger's cage, my friend, as you did. Suppose he'd been a real one?"

"But he wasn't. I only did it in the intrists av th' public. Y'see, the Princess lift me stranded f'r an athraction, an' what was I to do at all? The raison I niver introjuced ye to the little Durbar feller was so's to make the fight more spontanioss-like. Now, be a good boy an' git to your cage. The crowd's beginnin' alriddy."

"I'll see you——" I commenced in no gentle tones, but stopped as I felt Hawk tweek my arm.

"Do as he says. You'll do no good by refusing. Leave it to me. I've a scheme," he whispered darkly, and induced me to return to the cage.

The Colonel adjusted the partition, lighted some ten pungent naphtha lamps, and went outside. None of his helpers had returned, so the good Chugg had to run the show off his own bat.

In spite of his size and humbug, he was a glutton for work. To all intents he was about ten different men, not to count the orchestra. He harangued the crowd, he took the money, lectured on the attractions, and assisted by an aged broom, prepared the tent previous to the show. And if his men didn't come back by the time he struck his colors, he'd have

to pull the tent down himself, for I didn't feel like helping, and Hawk was too jolly lazy.

Savage though I was, I felt a little sorry for him. The loss of his money was not lessened by his reluctance to set the police on the matter, as the inquiries those gentlemen might make would involve explanations as to the *bona fides* of his collection. It occurred to me that the wolf lady and her consort might have had a hand in the business, and returned to the glimpses of the moon with the laudable idea of collaring a dowry, but as the Colonel was not about when it occurred to me I let the idea slip.

For the second time I watched the people come in, in even greater numbers than before, for they wedged so tightly there was no room for them to even blow their dainty noses. The bear episode had no doubt spread round the neighborhood, and the local nobility and gentry had turned up in full force to see if the prodigal had returned, and looked pretty blank when they found he hadn't.

The most fastidious visitor had no reason to complain of a lack of roars and howls that evening. It was some relief to me to give vent to my sorrows, even if the only way I could do so was by yelling, and from the awful racket which proceeded from the man-eater's den I concluded Hawk was not in the best of tempers.

Again did the Colonel mount the rostrum and enlarge on the sublimities of his unrivaled menagerie. He reassured the audience about the bear, telling them that he had just received a telegram that the ursine wanderer had been captured and taken to the Zoo, under the impression that it had escaped from there. This so pleased the people they cheered him to the echo when he introduced the Equine Marvel as a substitute.

The Equine Marvel, I regret to say, was not a success. This may have been due to the lustiness of the Colonel's ventriloquial powers, but I formed the opinion that the Marvel was an unwilling performer.

He refused to stand still. He bucked and reared each

time the Colonel approached him, and then lay down; nor could the united efforts of the audience and his master induce him to stand. The Colonel tried to pass this off as part of the performance, but it fell flat, so he roped him up again and proceeded with the Jungle Demonstrations.

We fought more artistically that night; my rancor against Hawk had vanished, and he, with an eye to the main chance, had no desire to upset me. So we made up for action by noise. I am still reminded of Hawk's roars whenever I pass a dentist's.

The Colonel made a praiseworthy attempt to atone for the Marvel's supineness and our lack of ferocity. He replaced the partition and entered my cage, to give, as he said, "an ixhibition av Obadiah's edicational faculties," and tried rashly to make me jump over his stick and do other childish tricks.

But I was in the wrong humor, and pretended to misunderstand him. I felt what he really wanted was a good romp, to take him out of himself, so I frolicked. I don't know if it took him out of himself, but he very quickly took himself out of my cage, and he stopped trying to feed me with raw bones; when public feeding time came directly I got into my stride as a coker-nut shyer, with him for the nut.

After the performance we assembled in the dismantled dressing-tent, and discussed a supper cooked by the Colonel's fair hand. I concluded he didn't intentionally fry the sausages in lamp oil, unless he had a turn for quaint flavors, but they are not at their best cooked in that medium, nor is tinned salmon nice when stewed up with onions; but hunger is a good sauce, a better sauce than the Colonel offered us.

"There may be wan or two things I can't cook," he had said complacently, "but just you thry this sauce."

We did. It was one of them. Nevertheless, we made a fair meal, getting over the too flavorsome parts with the aid of chunks of bread.

Our repast over, Chugg fetched two large horse blankets from his caravan.

"The van's too small f'r more than one to slape in," he apologized, "so ye'll have to shake down here unless you prefer the cage?"

I was about to demur at sleeping in a drafty tent, when Hawk, who had removed his tiger's head, warned me with a look.

"Well, good night to ye," said the Colonel in a genial voice; "and as to our little talk about ye lavin' the show, forget it. I'll forgive ye. Send the lawyer boy the scrape av your pen on a picture postcard; it'll do as well, and he might come down and see the show."

Hardly had he dropped the flap of our tent before Hawk eagerly whispered to me—

"Now for my scheme."

"If it's anything like the rotten foolery of your former schemes, I'll see you blowed before I follow it," I warned.

He disregarded the interruption.

"Here's the position. You must get to those solicitors, for I wrote to 'em and undertook to produce you personally. You have neither money nor clothes, nor will old stick-in-the-mud help you. It's too far to walk in these glad rags, so what's to be done?"

"Harp on it," I said bitterly. "I thought you just now stated you had some plan?"

I kicked Obadiah's head at him gloomily.

"First of all, if you can't walk you can ride."

"Motor-car?" I snorted.

"No, the Equine Marvel. These blankets will hide our menagerie skins——"

"*Our* skins?"

"Yes, I'm coming too, of course."

"That's where you make a mistake, old chap," I answered definitely. "I may manage to get through without notice, but if you come we'll have a regular festal crowd to cheer us the whole way. I know you, my friend. I'll play Lady Godiva alone, thank you."

"Sorry to disappoint you," said Hawk, "but I either come

or you don't go! I'm not such a fool as to let an ugly duckling slip just when it's going to lay golden eggs. A word from me to the Colonel, and pst! you're done."

So I had to submit. Perhaps now the Demon was out of the way we should get along quieter. Hawk showed me how to jab a hole in the center of the horse blanket for my head, and I was grateful to find when I put it on that Obadiah's skin was hidden.

Disguised in the other blanket, Hawk softly lifted the flap, and we entered the big tent, which was dimly lit by a lantern tied to the center pole, and was most eerily still.

In the feeble light we at first failed to make out the classic form of the Equine Marvel until I was apprised of his whereabouts by having a large mouthful of blanket bitten out of my left shoulder.

It was obvious the Marvel had gnawed through the rope which held him captive, and was taking a digestive amble round the collection. The way he eluded our grabs at his halter showed a depraved habit of long cultivation. He also looked so malignant whenever I caught his eye that I felt it better to let Hawk capture him, instead of sharing the honor.

This he effected by subtle means. He pretended he did not see the horse. He turned his back on the animal and gazed at the roof of the tent. The Marvel thought this to be a good opportunity for some tooth work, so he approached him from behind and was immediately caught, and a tendency to struggle quickly quelled by a thump on the nose.

By dint of much force the Equine Marvel was urged out of the tent, and by some miracle—I don't pretend to explain how—we clambered on to his back.

Hawk sat in front and held the steering gear. I sat behind and held on to Hawk with a grim clutch which nothing less than a cyclone could sever.

But it is one thing to mount an old circus horse and quite another to make him do what you want, unless you know the key of his combination. To kicks and thumps he was

utterly insensible. There he stood, firmly, defiantly, and detached, as though he'd just come out to see what kind of night it was, and whether it was likely he would have to take his umbrella to the office in the morning.

We tried "Gee-up!" "Hoop-la!" "Allez!" and other and more suggestive commands. The Sphinx was a piece of quicksilver to the Equine Marvel.

"This promises well," said Hawk savagely, as he wrenched at the halter again. "We'd better get out and walk. I wonder what does start the brute? The band? Let's whistle to him."

It was a happy thought. The first bar of "The Star-spangled Banner" fetched him, and he started. Unfortunately, however, he moved in a circle, with that peculiar action known, I believe, as the *haut école*—a slow, high-stepping prance. There, under the quite moon, with two anxious humans dressed in blankets and animal skins on his back, did that infernal piebald solemnly cavort in a circle, and nothing we could do or say would stop him. Round and round he went until the very heavens swam before our giddy eyes. Our unguardedly loud remarks at last penetrated the sides of the caravan and reached the Colonel's ears, for as the Marvel curved towards it for the two-hundredth time he was suddenly confronted by the figure of his owner, awesome in a red and orange pajama suit, at the van's open door.

The honored Chugg peered in silence for a second. Evidently he did not associate this ghostly circus act with either us or his horse. Then he gave vent to an unearthly yell, fled into the caravan again, and banged the door.

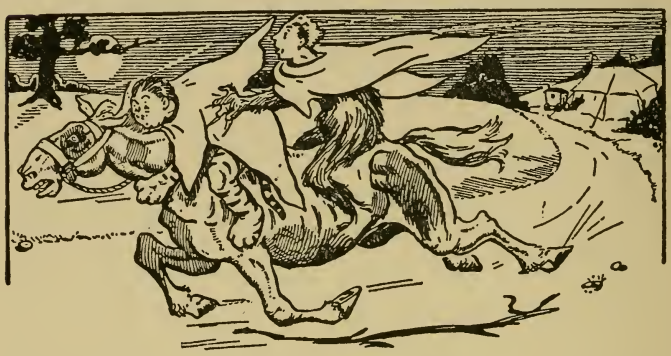
The pajamas unsettled the Equine Marvel, and the yell completed his discomfort. He stopped short, gathered his legs under him, gave one nerve-racking buck, and streaked off across country.

Hawk clung round his neck, and I clung round Hawk's waist and shut my eyes.

"Now," shouted Hawk, as we tore a hole through the night, "now we look like getting there in time."

CHAPTER XV

Demonstrates the difficulties of a night ride on an awkward steed. We arrive at my Uncle's lawyers, and learn the legacy is based on the production of the dog. The Equine Marvel at Covent Garden, and Hawk and I at our wits' end. We determine to seek the Colonel's advice.



It was pure luck that the Equine Marvel lit out in the right direction. For all we knew, he might have headed for Land's End, as our whole minds and bodies were absorbed in the important necessity of sticking on.

Fortunately he wasn't one of those fat circus horses whose rotundity presents no points of adherence, but rather he favored the alpine or craggy form, deep-hollowed and sharp-angled, which admits of grips.

Hawk hung on to the rope which deputized for reins with one hand and round the brute's neck with the other, whilst for myself I clung to Hawk with my arms and round the horse's waist with my legs, and earnestly deplored the fact that the species of ape Obadiah belonged to did not run to tail, or I might have been able, as I wore his skin, to loop Obadiah's caudal appendage round some promontory of the Marvel and thus gain further stability.

After his first spurt our steed settled into a most uncomfortable lope, and still obsessed by the idea that he was in a ring, would occasionally swerve in a complete circle and then dash on again, to our intense anxiety; for he gave no signal when he was about to loop the loop, but plunged gaily round without warning. Add to this that we were riding at night without any light save the moon, and that although the Marvel's crags and peaks afforded a good hold, they were precious uncomfortable to sit on, it will be perceived that the pursuit of wealth, such as we were engaged on, had its disadvantages.

It must have been about the eighth mile of our weird progress when we sighted breakers ahead in the shape of a dim form with a lantern. Hawk was too busy preserving his seat to reverse the engines, even had the Marvel obeyed the helm, so we charged that unhappy lantern-bearer willy-nilly. He, a policeman on patrol, bit the earth, but arose immediately and blew wailfully on his whistle. The Equine, whose musical education had certainly been much neglected, considered any music to be a band, and a circus band at that, and to him the band was a cue, so he circled at the first note of the whistle, stopped a moment, and then began again his *haut école* antics, this time waltzing round the astonished policeman, whom he no doubt took for a ringmaster or clown.

It must be bad enough to be a night policeman, without being charged at full gallop by an apparently runaway horse; but to have that charger return and solemnly prance round one whilst his half-tiger, half-ape, and human-headed riders storm and cuss at both you and the horse, is a little too much. Anyhow, this is what our victim seemed to think, for he arose and sought safety in the nearest tree, where we heard him scuttle amongst the branches in great agitation.

The ringmaster gone, our noble Arab concluded his act was over, and assisted by a hearty kick from us both, resumed his camel-like canter.

"Do you think we shall ever get there, and if so, how can we appear in the streets like this?" I asked.

"Never trouble trouble till it troubles you," said Hawk cryptically.

I was glad he took it so calmly. Personally, I didn't care to make a state entry into London dressed as an orang-utan trimmed with a horse blanket, and mounted on one of the two circus horses which came out of the Ark.

I don't pretend to know how it came about, but we suddenly found ourselves turning out of a lane onto a tram route, along which, albeit there were no trams running, a cavalcade of market carts plodded.

These gave the Equine Marvel the idea they were a procession, and though he seemed to miss the elephants and band, he fell in docilely in the shade of a large cart covered with cabbages.

"We'd better keep in the lee of this wagon; it will trot us up to Covent Garden without undue publicity, and once there we can keep out of observation until the lawyers take down their shutters, what?" said Hawk.

I jerked a "yes" in reply, any further speech being impossible, for the Marvel, who was a most conscientious beggar at times, had adopted a processional gait of high steps and mechanical prances which felt like sitting on a steam hammer, and most of my breath was gone.

I was conscious of a growing sense of loneliness. Hawk maintained a morose silence. I longed for the company of the Demon, now, alas! no doubt gone to his long rest in the interior of a bear.

The Old Kent Road flitted drearily by; the Elephant and Castle wobbled past, and Waterloo Road depressed me to an unexpected extent. To my mind it was as though the lost soul of everyone who had ever missed a train hovered there. Over the bridge the silhouette of Somerset House drew a spasmodic chuckle from Hawk.

"Think of us walking in there dressed thusly to demand a sight of your Uncle's will!" he said.

Past the Lyceum and up Wellington Street paced the Equine Marvel. Then vanmen woke up, and tugged and

cussed as is their wont, and amidst an indescribable hubbub we reached the market.

Hawk motioned me to alight, and slipping off himself, led the horse slightly out of the main scrum to where some empty carts stood by the railings. Here he tethered the Equine Marvel, carefully chose a comfortable covered van, climbed into it, and went to sleep as though such a thing was to him nothing unusual.

I followed, but stayed awake with one eye on the horse, who had found several damaged carrots and walked into them like a starving man.

I had no desire to lose the Colonel's pet and render myself liable to a charge of horse-stealing. Americanized as he was, I had a notion Chugg might try to lynch me, or do something equally Arizona-Ike-like.

At half-past six Hawk awoke, and we descended from the van into a rainy world. The sky positively leaked. It was as if the principal cistern overhead had burst and all the plumbers had gone on strike; but soaking as it was, we were not sorry, for our blankets made us look much like drenched market porters to anyone who had the time to look, though most of them were in too much of a hurry to get into shelter to worry about our taste in fashions.

Hawk led me down Henrietta Street to the block of offices which contained Messrs. Upotterys' legal den, and to our delight we found the outside door propped open by a pail. I knew it was a pail, because I fell over it. We cautiously entered. A former visit to my Uncle's lawyers reminded me that their suite of rooms was on the ground floor, so we located it with little difficulty.

Here again luck was in our way. The office door stood open, and broomy sounds bespoke the presence of the morning charwoman. Hawk peered in.

"She's in the farthest room," he whispered. "Come on, we can hide."

Messrs. Upotterys' offices consisted of four rooms, opening out of each other. The first, in which we found ourselves,

was the clerk's office, where clients stewed until the firm could see them; the second was devoted to the head clerk, a certain Blenkins; the third to a cousin of the firm, who had little to do with its actual work save when he put more capital into it; and the fourth was the shrine of Son, the senior Upottery having descended to the legal heaven some years previous. The charlady was dimly observable in the shrine in the center of a cloud of dust.

Hawk raised the counter flap in the clerks' office and drew me behind it.

"Duck!" he whispered tersely. "She's finished in here; so when she's done old Kafoosalum's room she'll be off."

We therefore ducked, and in a few minutes had the satisfaction of seeing the lady depart. Directly she had gone we made for the shrine. I had a vague recollection of a cupboard therein from which the firm had produced sherry and biscuits for my delectation when I first visited them, and was delighted to find a supply still there. The sherry was the same, but the biscuits I was glad to see were fresh, and after our lengthy ride they greatly refreshed us, but Hawk need not have made such a mess with the crumbs.

Young Upottery had been at school with me, so I hoped he wouldn't mind the liberty we'd taken with his provisions. He had often shared the humble but satisfying pork-pie with me in dormitory days, and I remembered him as a genial chap.

We were both tired with the ride on that lumpy and spasmodic horse, and after our meal must have fallen asleep, for I recollect a loud "Ahem!" woke me with a start. A clerk and an office boy stood and stared at us.

"What is it?" asked the clerk.

"Some freaks for the music-hall agency upstairs blown in here by mistake," suggested the office boy in a *blasé* voice. "You remember we 'ad a harmless wonder 'op in 'ere t'other day and want to fight the guv. for not giving him a contract."

"Well," said the clerk, "they can't stop here, you know. Ask 'em to clear out."

"You fellers," said the office boy, "'ave made a mistake. This ain't the missin' link office. Next floor, third door on the left, ask for Mr. Isaacstein; that's your mark."

Hawk arose in his wrath to demand apologies, and would have done so by force had not the firm entered at that moment.

Upottery.

Upottery Junior was a tall, lathy, lamposty individual with a lisp, and was worth his weight in gold to the firm, of which he was now the head. Old gentlemen itched to pat his good young crest, recalcitrant defendants softened at his bland voice and paid up, and old ladies became clients at the mere sight of him. He was a stickler for proper dress, and such an exquisite that our unconventional appearance nearly paralyzed him.

"Can it be Dobbth?" he stammered, as his eyes roved over Obadiah's mangy skin.

"It is," I answered. "What did you want me for? I only heard yesterday."

"You're a benefithiary under your Uncle'th will," he said mildly. "But where have you thprung from, in thuch clotheth too?"

"Never mind about his clothes," cut in Hawk; "we've had a hard job to get here, and have no time to spare. Cut out the questions and come to the answers, my young friend."

The firm gave him a pained look, and continued—

"Well, perhapth we may leave detailth till later. I'll read you the will tho far ath it relateth to you."

He opened the safe as he spoke and withdrew a document which crackled in a pleasantly bank-notish way, and read—

"Umph! Ahem! Immphm! Ah, here we are . . . 'And to my nephew Arthur Dobbth I give and bequeath a quarter share in my Pectoral Pellet buthineth, together with the thum of twenty thouthand poundth in contholth free of death duty, and my collection of carved mouth-trapth——'"

"Twenty thousand and a quarter share in a big business! I congratulate you, old boy. We'll have the time of our lives,

what?" enthused Hawk. "My own idea is a houseboat for the summer and a flat in the West End in the season, eh?"

He took it for granted we shared equally, a point I determined to disillusionize him upon directly I came into my own.

"Thtop!" said the lawyer with delicate hand upraised. "Thereth a a codithil dated three monthth ago which revoked all that, and leaveth you only the remainth of thome home Turkish bath, and giveth all the retht to the Thothiety for Prothecuting Boguth Doctorth."

"Ugh!" groaned Hawk. "That is the result of your silly tricks. Don't count on me any more."

"But," went on Upottery, "he added another codithil later to thith effect, that he left you an interetht in the buthineth of a thouthand a year, five thouthand in cash, and hith favorite fountain pen——"

"Changeable old boy," threw in Hawk, "but we can manage pretty well on that, and I want a fountain pen."

—"On conditionth you put in an appearance by Theptember the thixth, together with your dog known ath the Demon, and the entire legacy ith contingent on the dog living thixth month from that date. On the production of the dog I am empowered to pay you two hundred and fifty poundth, and if you attend again in thixth monthth, in accordance with the termth and conditionth of the will, you thall be put in pothethion of the legathy.

And to the best of my belief the Demon was engulfed in the bosom of a beastly bear, if he was not already digested.

Hawk's jaw dropped, and mine nearly fell on the floor. The lawyer fixed a gazelle-like eye on the ceiling, and softly whistled an air from the *Barber of Seville*, possibly as a mild protest against my hairy appearance.

"W—what happens if the dog is not produced?" I stammered.

He referred to the will, and read—

"In event of the dog dying or being murdered durin' the thtated period, then I give the five thouthand to the Home

for Ethiopian Mithionarieth of unthtable Mind, and the intereth in the buthineth to my adopted daughter Pectora."

"Of course," I said weakly, as beads of agony splashed down my face, "of course, I shall produce the dog, you know."

"Thertainly it would be a good idea," smiled the firm. "The fatal day ith to-morrow, so thall we thay eleven?"

I agreed. He might as well say eleven. It was a case of the eleventh hour in good sooth.

"Very good, then; and in the meantime, ath an old friend, if a tenner would be of thervith? I can thee thereth thomething radically wrong with your affairth, but when your Uncle uthed to try to explain he alwayth lotht hith breath, tho what it ith I don't know."

I hurriedly told him the subject was a painful one, and Upottery, lawyer as he was, was so used to rifts in family lutes he forbore to press me for details.

Hawk, with his usual insufferable cheek, thanked him for the tenner, and fervently assured him it would be of considerable service. He also added we had been forced to turn up in our present garb through the loss of our ordinary clothes whilst at a fancy dress ball, a most unnecessary lie, as the lawyer seemed to have a pretty shrewd idea, from the circusy aroma of the blankets we wore, that we had been lying low in the guise of mummers.

I was fairly bewildered about the loss of the Demon, but had still enough sense left to take the money he produced before Hawk got it, and we parted with mutual salutations after the office boy had fetched a cab.

Hawk suggested and I agreed that our first move should be in the direction of a clothier's. Two ulsters which reached to our feet, boots and a hat apiece made us a bit more respectable; then we drove to a quiet place and discussed a breakfast and our latest quandary.

"The Colonel'll be the boy to put us right," said Hawk. "He's in a way responsible for the Demon too, for if his bear hadn't interfered you'd be a bloated millionaire. His ex-

perience of tight corners will help, and he prides himself on disappointing nobody."

It was my last chance.

"But," I said, "you don't get me on the Equine Marvel again. I'm going by train."

"By the way, we'd better see what has become of that thoroughbred," said Hawk, getting up. "Not that anyone would be likely to steal him, but we don't want to upset the Colonel if we need his help."

We found the Marvel's halter still on the railings, but not a sign of its wearer. A little farther off there was a large ring of people, as though a fight were in progress, so we walked over to see if the horse was one of the spectators. An animal of his caliber couldn't be looked on as an ordinary horse. It was quite likely he was holding a combatant's coat, or acting as referee or timekeeper.

In effect he was the whole show. Buoyed up by unexpected carrots, the old mummy had began to sit up and take notice. He must have reasoned that the Covent Garden multitude was a circus audience, and that it was incumbent on him to amuse them, hence the crowd; for in the circular center of it we saw the Marvel gravely seated going through all the stereotyped motions of a gourmet at dinner. One market porter obliged as clown and waiter, and another slightly more drunken one enlivened the business with a mouth-organ.

The Equine at Covent Garden.

Hawk grunted. How were we to lure the old crock into private life again? We were about to try a sudden attack on him with the halter, but were saved any trouble by the arrival of a policeman, who sternly

broke up the audience, borrowed a rope, and led the Equine Marvel off.

"So he's safe for a bit," said Hawk, "and we are free to seek the Colonel and your dog."

We hastened to Victoria and caught a train for the nearest station to the unearthly place where the Menageric Aggregation lay, and I spent a frantic hour in the train asking myself, to the tune of the whirr and bump of the wheels, if it was any good relying on a Colonel who made a living by humbugging the public and inveigling innocent men into animals' skins.

CHAPTER XVI

Deals with our return and reception by the Colonel, who agrees to search for the dog, and during his absence we feed the animals. Too many flavors spoil the dish. A cod-liver oil entrée. We decorate the Colonel's caravan.

Colonel Chugg's Amusement Emporium looked lonely with its entrance flap closed and no sign of life near it. The caravan was also shut up, and the whole place reminded me rather of a disused cemetery.

We peeped through the slit in the small tent, but it was empty, and we thumped the sides of the larger one without evoking a sound save a mournful crawk from the birds of paradise.

"Perhaps the beggar's done something rash, what?" suggested Hawk.

"Let's try the caravan before we buy a wreath, though," I said; "possibly he's asleep. Anyhow, I hope we shall find him, for we shall need all the help we can get to produce the Demon in time, that is if he is at all producible."

Hawk therefore mounted the steps of the van, took a grip of the door-handle, and hung back and tugged. It was his own fault not to have tried the door gently first, because it came open without any effort, and thus precipitated him backwards down the steps again, and that he did not pull the caravan over with him is a standing marvel.

After a brief and scarlet interval we investigated the interior of the Colonel's peripatetic mansion.

"Natty little place," approved Hawk, as he nosed about, peered into cupboards, sampled the edibles, and generally made himself at home.

"See if he's under the bunk," I said, as I explored a large box.

"He's not here," replied Hawk, "so—— I say, did you close the door?"

"No, I did not," I said, as I noticed the door was shut, although I had not heard it close; and it was locked too, for when I tried to push it open it wouldn't budge.

"Someone's playing the goat," said Hawk, with rising choler; "some wretched boy must have watched us c'—— Whoop, mind your eye!"

I started and looked up. There in the roof, where a few minutes before had stood a ventilator, waved a revolver-garnished hand of such size it could only belong to the Colonel. Through what was left of the opening came a sharp voice of command.

"At the wurrd 'Wan' ye'll stand back to back, whoiver ye are; at the wurrd 'Two' ye'll lock your arrums togither an' take up a position dirictly onder me gun, me darlints; an' at the wurrd 'Three' ye'll have something f'r the good av ye're sowls. Have ye got that? Then 'Wan!'" With one glance at the weapon, we stood back to back. "Two!" We locked our arms and stood fearfully under the ventilator hole. "Three!" The pistol was swiftly withdrawn, a rope descended, and in a second we were encircled by a noose. In another second we swung awkwardly a foot from the floor, whilst the Colonel took a turn of the rope round the caravan chimney.

As he clambered from the roof I heard him mutter—

"This is where your Uncle Chugg gets his own back. I thought if I waited long enough I'd cop the fellers who've been thavin'. Furrst me incubator, thin me money, thin me star tioger an' monk, not countin' th' Equine Marvel, an' now be dinged ef they ain't burglin' me cabin. We'll have a look at ye, me fine lads, an' give ye what's comin' to ye."

He fumbled with the latch and came in, and turned to close the door behind him in order to enjoy his revenge in private. Hawk, infuriated by the tightness of the rope, had wriggled all the time the Colonel descended, and had thus given our hampered forms a pendulum-like swing, which caught the Colonel squarely in the rear as he turned.

With a grunt of surprise, he pitched through the open

doorway, whilst the sudden jerk when we struck him in some way snapped the rope, so that we swung out, fell apart in the air, and landed on the cold, hard ground about the same time as the Stars-and-Stripes-of-old-Erin gentleman demonstrated the law of gravity by crashing to the earth.

"Why, boys!" said the Colonel, as after he had wiped the fireworks out of his eyes he saw who it was. "An' where f'r the love av Hiven have ye been? I thought me show was hoodooed, f'r I had a vision last night av a ghost circus horse, wid ghoul riders, doin' stunts in the moonlight; an' when I looked into the tint this mornin' sorra a wan av ye was prisint, nor the Equine neither. An ixplanation 'd clear th' atmosphere. Me own imprission has bin that the thaves had come back an' shanghied ye both. If so, I'm sorry; if not, an' ye've been playin' the smart Alecs wid my property, I'll bust the faces av both av ye. Savvy? Now spake up."

Hawk took the lead.

"You see, Colonel, it was imperative for Dobbs to turn up at that lawyer's, so as you refused to allow him to go, we couldn't rest, and took a turn in the open air to cool ourselves down. The Equine Marvel came with us to see we weren't molested. Then the beggar ran away with us, and you'd hardly believe it, but he took us straight to the lawyer's. Marvelous sagacity some horses have to be sure, Colonel. There we were informed that Dobbs has been left a fortune which would put the wildest profits your incubator was capable of in the everlasting shade——"

The Colonel here rose impressively and extended a slab hand.

"Put it thar, son," he said. "I always thought ye had something in ye. If ye'll lend me the loan av a pencil an' paper I'll jot down a partnership agreement to wance, or," he added in a benignant way, "I'm open to dispose av the whole shoot for twinty thousand dollars. The sacred cow—buffalo I mane—is worth that alone; but I don't mind," he said recklessly, "anythin' to oblige ye."

Hawk impatiently waved him aside.

"There is an important condition attached to the legacy. He must produce his dog at the lawyer's to-morrow or he loses all."

"And your confounded bear's eaten him," I said gloomily.

"Me bar aten him? Niver belave it," said the Colonel. "He's got no tathe, to start with, an' been brung up strictly as a Wesleyan—vegitarian, I mane. So fur as Rastus is concerned, that pup's alive an' bright an' happy."

"Yes, but he's not here," I complained.

"Lave it to me, me bhoy," replied the Colonel; "I'll find um f'r ye, if it takes me years."

"But it's a question of hours," I urged. "I'd give anything to be able to produce him."

The Colonel favored the Hawk type of creature, in that no difficulty appeared to depress him, and he also had the same eye to the main chance which my friend suffered from.

"The houldin' capacity av me show is six pounds English. Two shows a day is twilve pounds. Call it twinty in round figures. Will ye reimburse me if I close down to-day an' assist ye?"

"I will," I fervently replied. "The recovery of the Demon would be cheap at that figure."

"Good," said the Colonel promptly. "So I'll start to wance. By th' way, where's th' Equine Marvel?"

"He's all right; we left him in safe hands," Hawk answered in a hurry, and I made a mental note to communicate with the police before they sold the brute to pay expenses.

"Right. Now you bhoys 'll hev to make ye'selves comfy whilst I git busy on Rastus's track. There's ceegars in the van an' a drop av the cratur lift, I belave. If any av the public come around I'll lave a notice up to say we're closed for rehearsals av a new jungle drama, 'Thrown to the Lions; or, The Roman Gladiator's Trip to Coney Island.' I'll be around by avenin', an' in the manetime ye'd oblige me by fadin' the animals," he concluded, as he tried to unconcertina the top hat on which he had recently sat, and after a hearty

farewell plodded off in the direction the Demon and Rastus had disappeared the previous day.

By the cheap alarm clock in the Colonel's boudoir it was only midday, so we had many hours to wait before he returned.

After we had pinned up the notice to the effect that the show was closed, we explored minutely every drawer, box and corner of the caravan to pass the time. I marveled that the Colonel troubled to carry such an awful lot of rubbish with him. Stacks of inspired newspaper cuttings, beside which patent medicine testimonials were rank pessimism; photographs of freaks, of the Colonel himself, of animals, of brethren and sisteren of the road and ring, and a daguerreotype of an enormously fat woman surrounded by ten fat children, and the upper part of the Colonel himself, the lower being obscured by a young Coloneless—evidently a family group. A bicycle pump, toothpicks, twine and chewing-gum, with a mass of patent specifications, filled any cracks amongst the other litter.

He was an inventive soul, the Colonel. My own efforts in that direction were child's play to his. Besides the incubator, we read of patents for celluloid false teeth, for clockwork roller-skates, for a non-explosive gunpowder, and for a weird mixture which taken internally was a tonic in summer and a cough cure in winter, and rubbed externally acted as a pain-killer and hair-wash, and melted down was a splendid lubricant for axles; and a scheme for utilizing Niagara to irrigate the Sahara. Oh, his was the fertile brain!

"If he can evolve all these things," said Hawk, "he'll find a way to catch the Demon without the trouble of putting salt on his tail. Ah, here are the cigars! Got a match?"

I had, and immediately wished I hadn't. We lit up, but the Colonel might have mentioned they were trick cigars with a cap fixed at every three puffs. My first good draw nearly blew my eye out, and Hawk's cigar went off bang directly he lit it.

We couldn't find the "drop of the cratur." The only

bottle labelled "Special" we found contained about three-quarters of a gallon of cod-liver oil, which did not appeal to us as a beverage, though no doubt it had its uses.

Time hung heavily. The strain of wondering if the Colonel would find the Demon was insupportable. So to take our minds off the stern state of fortune, we decided to fall in with the Colonel's wish and feed the animals.

"Chugg's a humane beggar, or else he wouldn't trouble over the crocks. If they were mine I'd shoot 'em. But he omitted to say where their grub was kept," murmured Hawk.

As a matter of fact, we couldn't find a vestige of animal food, unless they ate straw. We tried a handful on one of the monkeys, but the fuss it made when Hawk stuffed some down its throat was ridiculous.

"There's some cheese and pickles and sardines in the caravan," Hawk said hopefully, as he held a bitten thumb in his mouth; "perhaps they'd like some of that, what? Look at those birds of paradise. Think how a pickled chilli would buck 'em up."

"Yes, and a sardine or two'd do that Siamese moocow good."

"Make another good patent for Chugg. How to feed cows on tinned food to make 'em give tinned milk, eh?" chuckled Hawk, as he went to raid the Colonel's larder.

We found the sardines, cheese and pickles, and also unearthed a tin of curry, a pot of raspberry jam, mustard, Worcester sauce and onions, to which we added some odd bits of chewing-gum.

Hawk regarded the provender thoughtfully. He said it was hardly fair to give the cow the sardines and cheese, the birds of paradise the pickles and curry, the wolves the onions and mustard, and the happy family the rest, because if the cow preferred chewing-gum and jam she'd feel she hadn't had her money's worth without them.

His idea was to make a noble dish, a kind of *ragout*, of the lot, and share it out equally; then if the birds of paradise didn't fancy the curry, the next mouthful they took would be

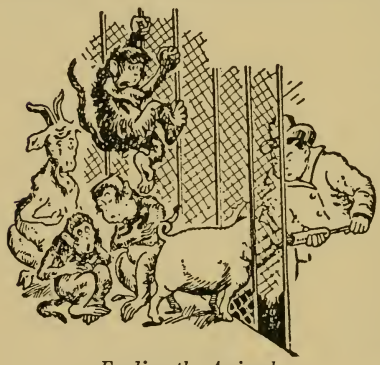
a nice flavorsome bit of mustard or some jam and chewing-gum.

"Nothing an animal likes so much as a varied diet," he said, as he stirred the ingredients into two pails, adding now a handful of mustard, now a sardine, now a lump of cheese, with the air of a West End *chef*. "This will be the finest meal they ever had. Make 'em perk up and snort, what?"

We carried in the food, which Hawk had christened "Hors d'Œuvre du Maître de la Ménagerie," although to my mind "Hors de Combat des Animaux" was a more appropriate title, and the hungry things crowded close to the bars of their several cages, for the strange aroma of the new dish awakened their interest.

Hawk slopped the mixture into some tins and put a generous portion into each cage.

The whole collection—the birds of paradise, the sacred buffalo, the wolves, and the happy family—fell to, and after the first mouthful fell over. Whether it was the mustard or the curry that took them by storm is an open question, but in a moment pandemonium reigned. The sacred buffalo picked herself up, and with a savage bellow hoofed the hors d'œuvre out of her cage; the monkeys of the happy family fled to the roof of their happy home and gibbered frantically; their pig and goat relatives, each of whom seemed to imagine the other had played a practical joke on him, fought frenziedly; and the birds of paradise, who were really pheasants with peacock's feathers seccotined on, lay on their backs and squawked; the wolves howled like lost souls.



Feeding the Animals.

Hawk was very indignant, and as he mopped off the hors

d'œuvre which the cow, in the heat of the moment and the mustard, had shot over him, he said—

"What do the beggars want, then? I believe it's a nasty fanciful way they've got into, or else their stomachs are out of order. They must need a tonic, something to give 'em an appetite. Fetch that cod-liver oil, Dobbs; they'd better be dosed."

"You'll never get 'em to take it," I demurred.

"Bring it and the bicycle pump, too; I'll give 'em a tonic," he commanded grimly.

Pump in hand, he waited until the cow opened her mouth to bellow when the hors d'œuvre kicked, and squished a good half-pint down her throat. I never saw an animal look so astonished. He had to content himself with spraying the birds of paradise externally, as they wouldn't open their beaks, but the happy family got their share. Each time a monkey yawned, splash went a dose into his mouth. Hawk's aim was good, and he did his best, but he looked hurt at the lack of appreciation accorded his efforts for their welfare.

The pig saved his faith in animal nature by taking the end of the pump in his slobby lips and with a smile of ineffable content allowed Hawk to fill him with oil to the brim.

Even after we had dealt with the animals a blank vista of empty hours stretched before us; and although we got some amusement from the disappointed looks of people who had come to see the show and had to go home without doing so, time still hung heavily.

So we turned to and decorated the caravan for its absent master. I had found some distemper colors such as scene-painters use, and Hawk undertook to brighten her up a bit. When he had finished, the brightness of the colors was nicely balanced by the somberness of the subjects he had chosen.

The left side showed, in purple and green, an interior view of the nether world according to Dante; the right side bore a vermilion study of the French Revolution during a business rush, and the little window of the caravan was cleverly worked into the top of the guillotine.

I still think the back was his *magnum opus*. Here was seen the Colonel being mangled by the entire strength of the menagerie, over the legend, "Dimonsthrations av Life in th' Jungle a Spiciality."

The front bore a further portrait of the Colonel pushing the Earth into a huge incubator. Then, after he had decorated the shafts into green snakes, Hawk turned his artistic talents to the inside of the van.

He had barely finished turning the drawers and cupboards into nice cheery-looking coffins (their brass handles gave a touch of reality to the thing), and painted a realistic skeleton in the larder in the act of stabbing a poor, tottering, aged gorgonzola, when a rumbustious voice smote upon our ears. Its tones were the Colonel's, and as he caroled I wondered in a heart-sick way if he had been successful.

"It ixpresses wot we mane, sorrs,
Thot there niver yit was seen, sorrs,
Such a scorchin' exhibishun as this here partic'lar show."

sang the Colonel as he jovially greeted us. Had he really brought the dog? He seemed happy enough. The next few minutes would show.

CHAPTER XVII

The Colonel brings news of the dog, and resumes the chase, but at the last moment produces a substitute. Which is unmasked by my cousin. I learn there was no reason why I should have left home. The Colonel finds the dog at the eleventh hour.

We clambered out of the wagon to receive the Colonel in state, and when the decorations smote him in the eye he was in as great a state as ever he could have wished for. The Dante side struck him first, and he dropped the multifarious bundles he carried and walked somnambulistically round the van to see if there was anything to counteract the shock on the other side. It was a mercy he only saw it in the twilight, for as it was the green snake shafts nearly sent him into a nervous breakdown, and the guillotine incident drew a sob from his over-wrought heart.

But I was in too much of a hurry to bother about his feelings, and splurged forward with an eager—

"Well, have you got him?"

"All in good time, me bhoy," replied the Colonel, as he sat down on a parcel he had brought with him, and mopped the art-engendered perspiration from his heated brow. "All in good time. I got on the track av Rastus about five miles along the trail. The pup was wid him then, I was told, so I concluded they shtruck up a frindship, for Rastus was a gintle feller barrin' his tindincy to wrop his arrums around anythin' he loved, an' no doubt the pup had learnt to kape to windward av um. Anyway, they'd made London way, an' ten miles furder on I got news av um agin. It was tould me they'd been seen wid some people, an' from the discription 'twas the dago an' th' princess they'd fell in wid. A feller tould me he'd seen a bear an' a pup in tow av a dark guy wid a female woman wid um, an' the guy was makin' the bear

dance whilst the feminine lady took up a collection along the route. So y' see I got on their track like blazes," he concluded complacently.

"Then you found the Demon?" I asked.

"Nope. Not yit. But from what I know av the dago he'll be in London to-night, an' whin he's thar the only place he can put up'll be his brother's, who runs an ice cream joint an' has a convanient stable f'r organs, monks, an' bears, such as his Eyetalian countrymen carry around wid um. I'm on me way there now, but I called back to give ye th' good news before I wint an' collared um. You bet your life I'll grab thot pup whin I git thar; an' as I cyant come back agin to-night, I'll mate ye outside th' lawyer's in th' marnin'."

"And will it be all right?" we both asked anxiously.

"Sure's you're alive. I've niver yit disappoint——"

"Yes, we know all about that," interjected Hawk. "What we want to know is, are we to come with you?

"Somewan must stop with the show. I've lost enough," said the Colonel. "Lave it as I said. You mate me outside the lawyer bhoy's, after you've left all square here. Half-past ten in the marnin' 'll do. Ye can't do any good by comin', an' there's sure to be a scrap whin I pursuade the dago to render unto Cæsar th' pup thot belongs to his frind."

"Very well," I answered dubiously.

There certainly was reason in what he said. We could do little good if we did come up, so we might as well wait.

"I've brought ye some clothes," said Chugg. "Ye'll be wearin' out me skins if ye don't give um a rist," and produced from a parcel a cheap ready-made suit with chess-board checks, a pink shirt, a green tie, and a large collar. These he gazed on admiringly and handed to Hawk with a sigh, as who should say, "Here is tonsorial perfection."

From another parcel he pulled out a bright blue Early Victorian frock-coat with a velvet collar, a ruffled shirt *à la* Byron, and a figured waistcoat of roses trailed over a tartan background. Finally, he opened a basket, and after

taking out some bottles, a cucumber, a ham, a packet of sandwiches, a pork-pie and a loaf, delicately lifted out a pair of lavender peg-top trousers.

"There!" said he. "There's some glad rags, bhoys. Got 'em from a frind who's a theatrical costoomer. I'm thinkin' you'll be the greatest ever in them."

I looked at the clothes and silently thanked Providence our motor ulsters were long.

After he had joined us in a repast from the basket, he looked into the menagerie, fed the animals from a store of food he kept under each cage (a store we had not seen, so we forbore to worry him with details of the *table d'hôte* we gave the collection), he shook hands, and left us to our reflections.

When we turned in I told Hawk he need not have played the artistic ass with the inside of the caravan, anyway. It is no joke to sleep in what looks like a cross between an undertaker's store-room and a family vault. However, despite his portraits of coffins, I managed to go to sleep and to wake before he did, and thus collar the check suit in preference to the Early Victorian costume.

We fed and watered the animals, and I made everything as secure as possible, whilst Hawk swiftly painted a large notice on the tent to the effect that the show was closed owing to the funeral of the proprietor's esteemed wife, who who had died of scarlet fever in the caravan,

"That'll keep 'em off," he said, as he stepped back to catch the full glow of "Scarlet Fever" in foot-high capitals.

Then, as the Colonel would say, we hit the trail and scattooed.

Again the train took up the burden of my thoughts. Would the Colonel turn up—bump, bump? Or would he not—bangity, bang? Hawk, as usual, slept. He became very wide-awake though when we reached Victoria, and ignoring the fact it was only nine o'clock, insisted on a taxicab and the speed limit, so we reached our destination with nearly an hour and a half to spare.

We trampled morosely up and down Henrietta Street until

ten struck, and then took up a strategic point of vantage near Upottery's offices, and kept our eyes open for the Colonel.

Half-past ten came and went, so did a quarter to eleven, then ten to, and it was within four minutes of our appointment with the lawyer when the Colonel, red and breathless, tore up with a dog on a chain flying behind him.

But not the Demon. The Demon may have been ugly, but he never in his most hideous aspect came to such a pitch of horror as the extraordinary animal the Colonel had in tow. It was a pup, but what kind was and is beyond me. It was long in the body and short in the head, higher behind than before, and its tail was like a derelict scrubbing brush. It was every sad color from sage-green to neutral tint. It seemed to be the last product of mongrelism reduced to a science, and one of its ears had been chewed off and its left eye was watery.

The deputy Demon.

"Where's the Demon?"

"Whist!" blew the Colonel, "I was mistook in me judgemints. The dago niver wint near his brother's, an' I couldn't find um at all, at all. But I wouldn't disappoint ye. Ye said the solicitor had niver seen the pup, so wan's as good as another. Call um the Demon, an' who's to know he ain't?"

It was a last chance. Full of misgiving, I took that fearsome hound by his chain and tugged him across the road. Hawk followed, and the Colonel, with a paternal air, brought up the rear.

We were ushered into the managing clerk's office first, and he, Mr. Blenkins, cast one look at the dog and hurriedly sought the fresh air.

"Where on earth did you get him?" I whispered angrily to the Colonel, who proudly replied that he had found him on Saffron Hill with a kettle tied to his tail, and thus regarded

him as a direct sending of the gods. To me he looked like the practical joke of some malignant spirit.

As dandiacal as ever, Upottery himself came in on the stroke of eleven, shook hands all round, returned the Colonel's old Virginian bow with an equally graceful inclination, sniffed dubiously, and got to business.

"Tho you've brought the dog, Dobbth?"

"Yes, here he is! Not much to look at, perhaps, but —well, here he is."

Upottery looked him over, opened the window, and proceeded.

"I thuppothe thith *ith* the dog? I don't make any reflecthionth, but I have to be careful in the intereth of my late client."

Hawk began to bluster.

"Look here, sir, do you imagine Mr. Dobbs would foist a strange dog on you, or that I would be party to such a proceeding, what?"

"Orr me?" demanded the Colonel in a rich, deep, respectable voice.

"You both identify it, then?" asked the lawyer, who had edged away from the poor creature and now toyed with a scented handkerchief.

"I've known thot pup, sorr," said the Colonel impressively, "since I sold it to the party from whom Mr. Dobbs got um. 'Tis a fine spicimin intirely av a very rare breed, an' moreover——"

"Well, ath you thay itth all thquare and above-board, we may ath well protheed to bithineth. Jutht one moment," said Upottery, as he sailed in a swanlike way to the door and went into his own office.

"Bully for yez, me son," whispered the Colonel, as he smote me on the back with one of his barn-door hands. "Didn't I tell yez I'd pull ye through?"

The deputy Demon wuffled sadly, and eagerly followed something along his tail to the end and then gave up the chase, shut his watery eye, and uttered a dismal croak. He

was a depressing pup, like some bird of ill-omen, and I felt that there was yet trouble in store for me before I left that office. My forebodings were right.

The door of Upottery's office opened, and he entered, followed by a lady in black—a young lady. Could it be? It was—Pectora!

Pectora, rendered more delightful to look upon than ever by an admirably-fitting black dress; Pectora, with the eyes that looked one over and dropped one out of the window without her saying a word; Pectora, who had turned up just in time to complete the muddle the Colonel's bear had started.

She nodded to me in a friendly way, for under her curious delight in making me the victim of practical jokes, I believe she had no feeling against me, and I was glad to gather from her unexpectedly amicable smile that she evidently acquitted me of any part in the unfortunate end of poor old Uncle, her adopted father.

Hawk wilted under her searching glance, and the Colonel's fat face, which wreathed in smiles had beamed upon her, froze into an expression at her stony stare akin to that of the sacred buffalo when cod-liver-oiled.

"Well, Mith Bothcobel, you thee the wanderer hath returned," said Utoppery in bland tones.

"So I observe," said Pectora, who looked at the Demon's understudy with growing surprise.

"And he'th brought the puppy ath required," continued the lawyer, who had edged towards the window again.

"But *that* isn't the puppy!" exclaimed Pectora. "The puppy poor father meant was a nice little black, curly-wurly fellow, whilst this poor thing—— Why, Arthur, you don't mean to tell me your dog is dead?"

"Not dead, but—er—sleeping," I replied at random, for at the moment my mind had been dwelling on, of all inappropriate things, the coffins which Hawk had painted inside the caravan.

The situation had rapidly grown too much for me. The only comfort I obtained was seeing how she looked at Hawk.

"Ithn't thith the dog, then?" queried Upottery from the window.

"Certainly not," declared Pectora. "I believe he's lost it, and that ridiculous little man there" (she scornfully indicated Hawk, who tried to hide behind the Colonel) "who passes for a doctor has induced him to rashly substitute this unhappy animal."

"Immphm," said Upottery, and we all looked at the dog as though it were all his fault.

During the pause I heard the Colonel whisper to Hawk, "This is a family affair, son; we'd better quit," after which he rose, gave Pectora a dignified bow, swept his hat at the lawyer, and taking the dazed Hawk by the arm led him softly away.

"And now, Arthur," said Pectora, as she gently put the hound outside, to Upottery's obvious relief, "don't you think you might explain?"

I did as briefly as I could. I pointed out that my intentions had been good, and that if any harm had come of them she was in the main responsible, for she had planted on me the pup which started the trouble.

I touched lightly on the ways of Hawk, only according him blame where he deserved it, and urged that I would long ago have returned to Middewick had not our departure been so calamitous and, to state it mildly, gladiatorial.

She found it difficult not to smile at some of the incidents I movingly related, particularly the jungle episode, and then told me how things had fallen out after I had gone.

Uncle, when he reached the hospital, had been recognized by the house surgeon, and his complexion quickly yielded to treatment, so that he got home again none the worse, just after Pectora had returned to prepare the spare room for the epileptic Doctor Gesoogenheimer, *née* Hawk; and the old gentleman was so pleased to regain his ordinary red shot with purple physiognomy, he inclined to treat the whole matter as a huge joke, and actually toddled down to ask us both up to dinner.

When he found the house locked up, he drew the conclusion that I had bolted to avoid his anger, and this flattered him. The next day he met Harker, and learned from him the details of our flight and the reason why Harker had retired from the force and taken to gardening, owing to shock from an encounter with a madman, a jest which kept him on the chuckle for days. Harker he soothed with a five-pound note, and the injured Gibble, who crossed his path a little while after and lamented greatly, he talked to to such purpose that Gibble had given up poaching from that day. (Uncle was a magistrate.)

My continued absence did not alarm him, but rather added to his flattered feeling that I trembled at his displeasure; and the fact that I had taken the Demon with me showed him I had obeyed his injunction never to part with the dog.

His will, however, from my point of view, showed too keen a sense of humor. What if the Demon never returned?

"And do you mean to say, Pectora, that there was no reason why I should not have come back weeks ago?"

"None whatever, Arthur; father would have been pleased to see you."

I felt at this news something like a chameleon put on a piece of Scotch plaid, explosive; but I was saved the necessity of translating what I wanted to say about it into polite English by the clatter of feet in the next office and by the crash of the door as it banged open.

The dago.

The massive back of the Colonel appeared, bent bow-shaped, and obviously the good Chugg was pulling some reluctant thing along. He and it, or rather they, wedged in the doorway a moment, and then shot into the room like a cork from a champagne bottle.

In one enormous hand the Colonel dragged and shook by the collar an undersized Italian, who gesticulated tearfully; with the other he hauled in a subdued and weary bear.

Upottery pushed the window farther open and stood transfixed.

"Say," snorted the Colonel, as he tightened his grip on his captives and faced us, "say, we was walkin' forninst the back av Covent Garden, whin Misther Hawk sighted Rastus an' this blessed dago, what had the owdacity to skip wid me wolf princess. She was wid um too, but bolted, but not before Hawk had gotten a grip on the dog, an' I grabbed Rastus an' this spalpeen, an' didn't I say I niver disappoint the pooblic?" he roared triumphantly, as Hawk appeared with the Demon in his arms.

The Demon sighted Pectora, gave a squirm out of Hawk's arms, and joyfully dived at her with happy yelps as though she were his long-lost aunt.

Hawk struck an attitude, but everybody was too busy to notice him, as all our attention was needed to prevent the wrathful Colonel killing the Italian there and then, and in avoiding the loving arms of the bear.

"This is the dog at last," said Pectora, "and to prevent any further accidents I think I'll keep him with me for a little while. In the meantime Mr. Upottery will no doubt arrange matters with you, Arthur, and then you might call on me at my hotel."

"Yeth," agreed Upottery, as he opened the door for her; "and if the Colonel will be tho good ath to take hith chargeth outthide, we will thoon thettle the buthineth."

At last I was on the verge of coming into my own.

CHAPTER XVIII

In which the legacy is saved, and I determine to retire from the strenuous life. A farewell lunch to Hawk and the Colonel, and a visit to a matinée music-hall, where an illusionist is tied up, and Hawk is undone. The strategy of Chugg outwits a would-be bride. A good-by supper. Hawk evades matrimony by joining forces with the Colonel, and I return to Middewick.

In spite of his lisp, Upottery was most business-like, and had obtained my signature to several documents, handed me some bank-notes, sent the office boy for a bottle of disinfectant to remove the lingering fragrance of the bear and the Demon's terrible understudy (who, by the way, had completely vanished), shaken hands twice, and bowed me out, all inside ten minutes.

I perceived the Colonel and Hawk, flanked by the bear and the Italian, on the opposite side of the road, waiting for me; and as they had an interested crowd round them, and I had no desire to be lectured on in public—for the Colonel would be sure to improve the occasion—I bribed a boy to take a hurried note to Hawk, in which I asked him to meet me in two hours' time, and suggested he should employ the *interim* in stabling the bear, turning off the dago, and looking up the Equine Marvel.

Then I hurried to Pectora's hotel. She, with the Demon, who was illuminated with a pink ribbon, for a wonder received me most graciously, and in course of conversation seemed to expect that I would return to Middewick that very day and commence the life of a country gentleman.

But I had yet to deal with Hawk and Chugg. I felt I owed them something, for if Hawk had not informed me of the legacy I should still be a wanderer on the face of a menagerie, and if the Colonel had failed to find the Demon my predicament would have been nearly as bad, and I preferred to arrange the matter in London rather than bring

them down to Middewick, and very likely have them paint the place red in their exuberance. Moreover, I knew Hawk to be a good "Welcome the coming," but a precious bad "Speed the parting" kind of guest, and I had my doubts whether the Colonel might not insist on bringing the show with him.

So I excused myself, and promised to come down on the morrow, "as," I said, "I have one or two little things to settle first."

Pectora said she didn't know how I could call the Colonel little, but she quite understood.

My next move took me to a tailor's, and shortly afterwards, clothed in more Christian style than the Colonel's chessboard choice, I met that worthy and Hawk, both of whom wore smiles and big cigars.

"We've soused th' dago in Trafalgar Square fountain, an' stabled the bear, an' seen to th' Equine, son," said the Colonel as we descended upon a restaurant, "an' now we'll fade th' animals."

That was a memorable repast. Hawk was no mean trencherman, but the Colonel must have been in his many-sided show past a human ostrich.

Waiters, awed by the sight, left their customers unattended to devote their whole time to watching him. The manager took one glance at the pile of empty plates, then hurried to the telephone to ring up the wholesale suppliers for more grub. When Chugg had finished three waiters had broken down and the others leaned on each other for support.

Between them, he and Hawk spent about twenty million pounds of my income whilst we lunched. Hawk's idea was a kind of perpetual "fling," with motor-cars and aëroplanes and a steam yacht as side issues; and the Colonel dreamily outlined, when his mouth was not too full, a sort of mammoth show which had the purchase of the Zoo as a nucleus, and finished up with the Albert Hall as a permanent place for it with Olympia as general offices. He babbled, too, about an elephant he knew of to be bought as a bargain.

To take their minds off filthy lucre until I decided what and how much to offer them to leave me to lead the simple life instead of their cyclonic one, I suggested a look in at a *matinée*, and they both agreed.

And thus came about Hawk's undoing. We were seated in the stalls of the Colidrome, and the Colonel waxed loud on many stage secrets, much to the annoyance of everybody within hearing of his fog-horn voice.

I suppose it was professional rivalry, but he continually decried each turn; and when the number of Signor Prestovitch, the World's Stupendous Illusionist, went up, I was deluged with a "how it's done" dissertation from both Hawk and Chugg, for Hawk enjoyed a good grumble almost as much as a five-course dinner.

The Signor.

"These illusionists are fakes, thot's what they are, public humbugs," snorted the Colonel indignantly. "They tell the people anythin' to get 'em to watch their games. Why, if I'd discinded to such hypocrisy, I'd niver look me sowl in the face again."

I mused on the birds of paradise and the jungle demonstrations, but held my peace, for the Signor had come forward to the footlights, after banging a large trunk to show it was empty, and informed the audience in a pained voice that he would get into it, allow anyone to rope and seal it up, and then "in the callery mit a peautiful punch of vlowers in each other of his hands appear."

He added that if any lady or gentleman cared to come on the stage and satisfy themselves there was no trickery, he would be very glad.

Hawk and the Colonel, full of skepticism and food, arose like one man and forced their way to the stage, as did also a large, fat woman and a hulking man of pugilistic aspect.

Directly they all reached him, the Signor wedged himself into the trunk, and Hawk and the Colonel fell upon the lid and brought it down with such a crash the Signor's head must have been crushed to pulp had he not been legs uppermost.

Then, as guardians of the public's right not to be gulled, they roped that trunk and the Signor up with a bewildering collection of knots. I heard Chugg gleefully say he had stopped up the air-holes in it, and Hawk, to assure the Signor there was no trickery about it, rapidly turned it bottom upwards and jumped on it.

Certainly they made a job of it. They were too busy to notice the woman and man who also watched the proceedings, but kept their eyes glued to the trunk whilst the orchestra played two waltzes, a selection, and a march. I firmly believe if the Signor had dared to make a move inside they would have thrown the trunk into the orchestra; they looked awfully stern.

Ten minutes went by; the Signor had not yet appeared. The band eyed the conductor wistfully, and began another waltz with aching arms. Still no sign of the Signor, either in the gallery or anywhere else; and considering the way Hawk had shaken the poor chap up, I expected he was dead; but although he did not appear, the manager did. He rushed on the stage, shouted some unintelligible words to the audience, pointed to the box, then at the curtain, and caught the latter on the back of his neck as it descended, and then pitched headfirst on to the bosom of the conductor, who collapsed into the first violins.

The manager seemed an energetic person.

At this point I left the hall and hurried round to the stage entrance. I concluded, as the curtain barred their return to the auditorium, my friends would leave by that door, unless they were detained for the manslaughter of the Signor, nor was I wrong, but I hardly expected the sight I saw on rounding the corner.

From a doorway, under a lamp marked "Artistes Only," emerged a very ruffled Hawk propelled by the pugilistic gentleman, who had a firm grip on his collar. Next came the stout woman in hysterics, and behind her the Colonel, hatless and flustered. Behind the Colonel came a boot attached to a uniformed leg, and over the heads of all flew several

bouquets of paper flowers, thrown by someone out of sight.

Hawk's captor turned sharp to the left, and drove his quarry before him, and I fell in by the Colonel with an open and inquiring mind to learn the why and wherefore of it all.

"'Twas this way," panted the Colonel as we scurried along in the wake of the fat lady. "No sooner had the curtain discinded than some stage hands unroped the Signor, and your frind started in to tell um pwhat we thought av him. Harrdly had he opened his mouth whin the female party who ye saw on th' stage gives a scrame an' shouts, 'It is—it is me darlint!' an' throws her arrums around Hawk's neck. 'Jumpin' Moses!' he yells, 'it's me landlady again!' an' struggles like a drownded man. 'Alars!' ses Mrs. Landlady, 'thot I sh'd have bin desaved by the wan I loved so. Naughty boy to run away from its own little pigeon,' ses she, 'an' us to be marrid shortly,' she ses. Thin the scrapper feller chimes in thot he's her sister—I mane she's his brother—bust it, ye know what I mane—an' he's not goin' to have his little Sally's feelin's thrifled wid by annywan; an' betune 'em they put the comethere on thot poor lad, an' if somethin' isn't done in a hurry, she'll marry him before he comes to his sinses agin."

"Where are they going?" I asked.

"Goin' to take um home to discuss the situation. Ye'll not desert a frind in throuble, I hope," said the Colonel wistfully. "Look at the face av her—'twould move a stone to pity."

Her brother.

"No, I won't desert him. I suppose they can be bought off?"

"Bought off, is it? Sure, but I've a better plan than that. Lave it to me, an' don't worry," he whispered as a bright idea struck him.

We had reached a turning off Tottenham Court Road, and with one hand still clasped on Hawk's collar, the forlorn

lady's brother produced a key and opened the door of a house labelled "Gentlemen taken in." Once inside, he strode downstairs to the basement, towing Hawk after him, and we descended also.

"And now," he growled, as he threw Hawk on the sofa, "what are you goin' to do about it?"

Hawk looked blankly at us; for once he was non-plussed. Silence reigned for a minute, broken only by the sobs of the landlady, who murmured, "He used to call me his little pigeon—his little Pidgy Widgy, he did."

Then the Colonel, in his most grandiose manner, walked over to the brother and shook hands with him.

"Sorr," said the Colonel, "'tis glad I am to mate ye entirely, and to be prisint on such an occasion to put matters right. Allow me to offer ye a ceegyar! To think thot iny frind av mine should run away from such loveliness!" he went on; "but niver will I see a lady desarted. So we'll make um kape his wurrd before he laves this house. Pwhat is the price av a spicial license, sorr?" he asked the brother, and rattled some coins in his pocket.

Hawk suddenly sat upright on the sofa as if it had kicked him, and "What?" he yelled.

The Colonel, under cover of an enormous hand, ostensibly raised to hide his emotion at Hawk's falsity, caught that disturbed individual's eye, put his tongue in his cheek, and winked not once but many times.

"I think," then resumed the Colonel, "if ye are all agreeable, 'twill be best to get the business settled an' the Georgian knot tied as soon as we can. So as 'tis too late to get a license to-night, we'll have wan first thing in the marnin'. Do yez agree, Misther Hawk?"

Hawk knew his Colonel, and played up.

"Yes—yes. I only endeavored to elude her because—er—I did not feel worthy."

"Her?" asked the landlady coyly. "Say your little Pidgy Widgy, love."

"Piggy Wiggy," snapped Hawk.

"So thot's settled," said the Colonel breezily, "an' the nixt thing is to dhrink the hilth av the bride to be. If the lady won't mind fetchin' a bottle av the cratur an' a siphon," he said, and produced a sovereign, "her brother an' us will guard the blushin' bridegroom."

To judge from her complexion, the landlady would need no pressing to go on such an errand, nor did she, but tripped off gleefully to obtain the nectar, after she had bestowed a kiss on the shuddering Hawk.

"I'll lock the door afther her," said the Colonel in a knowing way to her brother, at which the latter chuckled.

He had not expected things to be so easy. These put-up games often went a-gley. Put up it was, for though I credited Hawk with much idiocy, one glance at the lady was in this case enough to prove his innocence.

The admirable Chugg locked the door, pocketed the key, took his coat off, and rolled his shirt-sleeves up.

"Hullo! what's that for?" demanded the brother uneasily.

"Ye'll see," replied the Colonel darkly as he strode across the room. "D'ye think I've niver met a duck like yez before, ye putty-faced swab from a third-rate pug' booth, wid no more fight in yez wid a man av ye're own size than a fish-eyed, flat-footed galoot av a deginerate dago? D'ye think ye can play the crook game on me, whin I've been in the show line all these years, you pop-eyed jay? Fancy I don't know what to do wid a old hobo like you, huh?"

"Here," said the brother, rising, "that's enough! What's your game, old man?"

"This, me pink-eyed jool," replied the Colonel, and lovingly wrapped himself round that landlady's relative and bore him to the floor, where Hawk joined the fray, and in two minutes they had the fellow trussed up in the hearth-rug and gagged with one of his own boots, and unceremoniously shot him under the sofa.

"Open the door," said the Colonel, as he resumed his coat and threw me the key; "I'll go an' reconnoiter."

From the basement window we could see him lounge on the front door steps as though he were simply taking the air, and in a short time the landlady turned the corner.

"Ah, me dear madam," came the courtly voice of Chugg, "allow me to relave you av ye're burdens. Ochone! I've drapped 'em! Now there's a clumsy feller for ye!" he said, as he kicked the broken bottles into the street. "But niver mind, it's soon mindid. Ye'll not object to fetchin' a dhrop more? I'd come wid ye," he added gallantly, "but I promised yer brother to stop here. Ye see, we must kape an eye on the bridegroom; his happiness has made him quite nervous."

The landlady, though she thriftily deplored the breakage, had no objection to fetching many more bottles, and immediately she was gone the Colonel clattered downstairs.

"It's us for the woods!" he shouted. "Come on wid yez."

We came at the charge, and got out of that house, on a bus, and across Oxford Circus before the Colonel had time to get his breath again.

Hawk sat silent and saddened.

"It was well meant," he said, "but they'll find me again. Bang goes my literary career! I daren't even let my name appear on a book cover again, or she'd storm the publishers until they surrendered my address. Mark my words, Dobbs, that awful woman will track me down yet."

"Niver, if ye follow me advice," chortled the Colonel. "Durbar's skin is waitin' for yez; an' if ye'd buy an intrist in the show, wid your talints an' me own invintiveness we'd make a fortune."

Here was an opening for me I had little expected. If I bought Hawk a share in the show, I should help him to lie low, please the Colonel, and be relieved of both of them. So I enthused.

"Just the thing! Let's have some supper and talk it over."

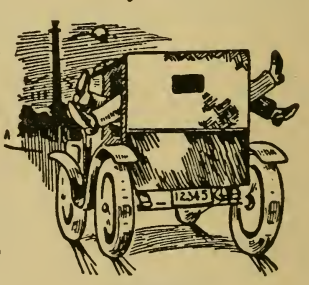
The Colonel nearly fell off the bus in his anxiety to accept my invitation to another feast, and whilst he again astonished the waiters we arranged details.

I agreed to finance Hawk so he could take a half share in the business, and then, as the Colonel hankered after an elephant ("Gimme a Jumbo and a pail av whitewash, an' I'll mint dollars wid the Sacred White Elephant from Siam; an' that'll allow me to use the cow, which is at prisint a sacred buffalo, as the last of the Amurican bisons"), I lent them a further hundred, making a hundred and fifty in all, and they on their side promised me cent. per cent. directly the profits of their first season came in; but as they haven't yet sent more than one postal order for two-and-threepence, I conclude the elephant did not take the whitewash well.

Jumbo and a pail of whitewash.

After many toasts, which made the Colonel so brimful of kindness he insisted on kissing all the waiters, we parted.

Hawk made a little speech to the effect that he'd always said I was the hiccupest chap he'd ever hiccuped, and he hoped in the fullness of time to hiccup my generosity. The Colonel grasped both my hands, and brokenly remarked that wheniver he saw an orang-utan he would think av me; and added in a dreamy, far-away voice that I'd better walk up right now, as the Jungle Demonstrations were about to commence. He then glared at the waiters, and asked them what they had stolen his incubator for, and burst into tears. It was a noble supper.



Au revoir.

The last I saw of them was when, with an arm round each other's neck, they entered a cab, and hanging their legs out of the side windows, grad-

ually drove into the distance, whilst their raucous voices chanted "Good-bye for Ever" to a strange tune all their own.

With a huge sigh of relief, I drove to Waterloo and entrained for Middewick.

CHAPTER XIX

Brings this history to a close. Home again. Uncle's collections. The Turkish bath precipitates a proposal, and the dog completes it. The lawyer and the Italians. A best man difficulty. A marriage and a wedding breakfast, which caused the end of the dog.

I HAD been in Middewick nearly three weeks before it struck me that I had developed a habit of dropping in at Pectoral Villa for meals.

It began with the Demon, as did most things. Since his return he had scorned my humble abode—possibly because most of the windows were broken owing to a rumor that it was haunted, hence small boys spent many delightfully creepy hours throwing stones "to kill that there ghost of Dobbs's"—and taken up his quarters with Pectora, who, now her father was no more, reigned supreme at the villa.

Of course, it was necessary for me to keep in daily touch with the pup, to see he didn't over-eat or otherwise imperil my future; so I would drop in to breakfast, or lunch, or both, and stay to tea, and then it seemed a pity to go before dinner.

Pectora and I were largely engaged in arranging the enormous accumulation of things the late excellent old gentleman had gathered together. There were collections of mouse-traps, walking-sticks, picture postcards, cigar bands, opposition cough-drops, testimonials from cured coughers, and letters from relatives of the people Pectoral Pellets had not suited, memorial cards, and a really fine library of miscellaneous books which ranged from a lot of Dickens to a dickens of a lot of French novels.

With the prospects I had in view I had given up the farce of work, and buoyed up by Pectora's less stand-offish manner, only awaited an opportunity to ask her to change her name to my own. The awkward part was to know when and how to make the request.

You had to be careful with Pectora, as she had a cynical strain of humor in her which was to be deprecated in a girl of her age.

I would gradually work up to the subject by way of votes for women and the latest musical comedy, and then, just at the crucial moment, in would shamble the Demon and get mixed up with my legs, or perhaps bring in a dead rat to cheer us up.

But I determined to persevere. All my other troubles had slipped from me. Hawk was a thing of the past, and worried me not. His tigerskin would suffice him till the coast was clear for him to harrow once more the souls of gentle errand boys with curdlers which would curdle more bloodthirstily than ever, by reason of his familiarity with man-eaters and the Demon. Gibble had packed up his live stock and ancient mother, and shaken the dust of Middewick from his number twelve boots. Harker, now a prematurely aged man, thanks to the ministrations of Hawk, had forgotten everything prior to his fateful railway journey, and devoted his time to stuffing the deceased pets of old ladies out of all resemblance to the pets in life. He was pleased in a chastened way when I looked in on him, and would shake his head wonderingly over his new profession.

"The works of Nature is very rum, Mr. Dobbs," he used to say. "I takes a dead canary and stuffs it, an' blowed if it don't look more like a orange when I've done."

I saw some of his specimens and fully agreed with him.

There came a day when, having neatly packed Uncle's varied treasures in a boxroom, we took a walk over the house. As we ascended, from the staircase window I could see the Demon on the lawn. He munched the garden hose, and had already masticated a fair length of it, but the brass nozzle appeared to worry him.

"This room," said Pectora, as she opened a door, "was poor father's favorite. He would never allow anyone to touch it, and it has not been interfered with since he died."

"Which, I suppose, accounts for all that litter in the

corner," I said, as I pointed to a mass of planks, partly charred, which lay in careless abandon against a boot cupboard.

Pectora smiled.

"Surely you recognize your great effort, Arthur? Why, I can still see you staggering under its weight."

"It's not——" I stammered.

To be brought face to face with one of the great causes of my recent sorrows was rather a shock.

"Oh, yes it is! The invention of the age—The Home Blacking Box." She laughed mischievously. "I wonder, had you continued to invent things, if you would have eclipsed so effective an apparatus?"

"Do you know," I said sternly, "I believe you gave poor Uncle that copal varnish on purpose, so as to make him think the bath was at fault."

She gracefully ignored this home thrust.

"Poor dad! And just after he had fallen into a booby trap I meant for you."

Here was my chance to get that proposal business forward.

"And why should you make booby traps for poor me?" I asked as archly as I could when my back collar stud had that moment slipped out, and was wriggling down my spine. Things like that always happened to me when I was on the verge of anything serious.

"Because you always seemed such a ridiculous creature," she answered kindly. "I've often thought you need someone to look after you."

"Then will you——" I began, and as I spoke that awful pup flew into the room and canoned in a most ungentlemanly way into Pectora, whom he jolted into my arms.

* * * * * *

"I do really think," said Pectora, as she lay on my shoulder, "that dog is as awkward and ridiculous as its master."

We both looked fondly at the Demon in his new rôle of

Cupid, and he immediately took the occasion as favorable to a terrible fit of coughing.

This took our minds off newly-engaged bliss, and caused us to rush to the rescue. The Demon may have been intrinsically valueless, but he represented to me a cool five thousand pounds and an income for life, and I therefore had no wish to see him asleep under a marble visiting card.

"Honk, honk!"

Pectora ran for something to ease his agony. (She meant well, but when she did return she only brought a screw-driver, which wouldn't have helped much), and I, with my collar still restive, and the stud now in the neighborhood of my left leg, hovered anxiously round him, listening in distress to his "Honk, honk, horrrk!"

Suddenly he gave a perfectly awful hiccough and rolled on to his back, where he continued to make uncomfortable noises.

"This is the end," I thought grimly. "Farewell, my canine friend, to you and to my hopes. Just my luck, and I don't know how to soothe your last moments, old chap, one little bit."

Pectora brought a screw-driver.

"Whoop! Horrk! Whoop! Hiccough!" shouted the Demon, and shot up in the air.

"Poor old man!" I went on, as I watched his contortions. "I'd do all I could if I knew what to do, but I'm afraid you'll have to rely on your own exertions, owing to my lack of veterinary knowledge."

Almost as though he knew if anyone were to help him it must be himself, he gave a final tremendous cough and produced, like a conjuror, the brass nozzle of the garden hose and two yards of india-rubber tubing.

This done, he got up, shook himself, made a playful dash at my legs, and trotted off comfortably. Two minutes later my fiancée returned with the screw-driver.

Pectora and I decided to wait until the probationary six months were up and all financial details settled before we became one, and devoted the intervening time to a zealous watch over the Demon which sorely got on his nerves.

What the Demon primarily liked to do was to eat whatever and whenever he fancied, and as his tastes ran to the most indigestible things he could find, he was always on the brink of suffocation, or going mad with the collywobbles. As Pectora said, a dog can't expect to eat the works of a phonograph without a record of suffering.

We curbed this enthusiastic appetite with a muzzle, but it had to be taken off at meals, and his angelic stillness whilst this was done he balanced by a quivering agitation when we tried to put it on again.

Even when muzzled he was a handful—two handfuls. He had a way of plowing up the ground with that muzzle in his efforts to get it off which necessitated an extra gardener being taken on to repair the flower beds, and a permanent lad to wash him—the Demon, not the gardener—daily.

Then, too, as the great day on which he must be produced approached, he would disappear for a day at a time. The boys of the village near by looked on him as a certain source of income.

"I seen that dorg of yours, Mr. Dobbs. Heow much if I catch un?"

The boys looked on him as a certain income.

I firmly believe the little beggars used to lie in wait and pounce on the Demon as he rootled up the shrubbery, keep him awhile, and bring him back with

some cock and bull yarn that they had found him six miles away. You never know to what depths a country youth will descend for pocket money.

Despite all this, we did manage to keep him whole until the six months were up, and although he did his best to dodge out of the cab window as we crossed Waterloo Bridge, we got him to Upottery's with no further damage than a bitten thumb—my thumb.

Upottery looked depressed. He was polite but misanthropic, and when we had concluded the business side of our business I asked him where the pain was.

He said it began from the day the Colonel had brought the Italian purloiner of his bear into his office. Antonio and his tribe somehow came to the conclusion that Upottery was at the bottom of the business, and acted accordingly. Never a day passed without a parcel with a dead monkey or some other dainty in it reaching the poor solicitor, and he was nearly driven mad by piano organs following him about. As for anonymous letters, with nice cheerful drawings of daggers and tombstones done in red ink, he received shoals. That very day he had tripped over an aged accordion dropped in his path by a countryman of the original southern bear catcher.

"But never mind," he said with a weary smile, at leatht your troubleth are over."

"So long as he behaves himself," qualified Pectora.

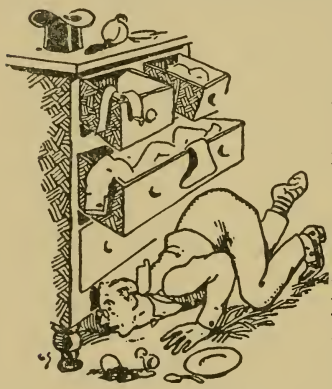
There was no reason why we should delay our marriage any longer. The conventions of Middewick were elastic, and we did not have anyone but ourselves to study; so it was not long before the local curate might be heard, on three consecutive Sundays, read our joint names in a feeble bleat before he turned with more enthusiasm to the notices about the Dorcas Society and the Mothers' Meeting.

There were few presents. The workpeople at the pellet factory gave us a silver-mounted model of a bottle of Pectoral Pellets, that was more valuable for the spirit in which it was given than for its use.

Upottery sent a set of engravings of the Italian lakes, and Hawk, who had heard of the coming event, forwarded an autographed copy of the fourpenny-halfpenny edition of his great work, *Detective Dashit's Daring*, and a dog whip. Pectora looked at the latter and said he was a horrid little man; but I never look a gift horse in the mouth, and it came in splendidly to coax the Demon with.

The Colonel wrote a benignant, fatherly letter of advice, and promised a present later. His epistle was flamboyantly headed, "The Amalgamated Menageric Aggregations Limited; P. K. Chugg, Col. U. S. A., President," and after calling down blessings on my nuptial union, earnestly commended the idea of a private Zoo to my notice.

My wedding-day will be ever memorable. To begin with, I had mislaid my cuff-links, and when I had found them I also found that my new white tie had fallen into the bath. My coat fitted about as comfortably as Obadiah's skin had done, and was a bit tighter under the arms if anything.



The wedding morn.

I was full of unrest. I had my doubts about the best man. I had few friends in Middewick, for the young men on attaining years of indiscretion fled to more wideawake towns. In despair I had even telegraphed to Hawk. He had replied, "Sorry. Too risky. Ware pigeons." Upottery was booked to give Pectora away, so I was thrown back on the Colonel.

He responded gladly that he never deserted a frind in throuble, and would meet me at the church gate. It was either him or old Mr. Dilwattle, the retired postmaster, who owned to seventy and looked a hundred, and had softening of the brain coming on, and his false teeth always coming

out, besides being deaf and lame, and though I doubted how the Colonel would strike the clergyman, I looked on him as the lesser of two evils.

But what would happen if he did not turn up? I had never been married before, and I didn't know if the ceremony might be legal without a best man. My only ray of hope was the Colonel's famous hobby of not disappointing the public; but the thing got on my nerves.

I made myself a bachelor breakfast for the last time, but I was so agitated that the coffee got into the eggs and bacon, I dropped the butter, accidentally trod on it, slipped, and skied the whole meal. To this day a solitary rasher adheres to the ceiling of that ancient house.

It was to be a quiet wedding. We had invited no relatives for the excellent reason that we had none, and Middewick people in general were a deal too Rip Van Winklish to turn out of their arm-chairs just to see a wedding.

Somehow I managed to get into my bridal costume, correct down to the infernally tight patent leather boots; and I registered a vow that whenever I got married again I would wear an easy Norfolk jacket suit and slippers, or jolly-well stop single.

I glanced at my watch and found it time to be at the church gate, put on my new top hat—for fiendish discomfort give me a new topper, an iron band is velvet to it—and hied me forth.

The Colonel awaited me.

As I came to the lich-gate of the church I saw that the Colonel had not failed me. There he stood, four-square to the winds of heaven, with a large parcel in one hand and a sword in the other. A sword, because he wished to look appropriate, and as he was dressed

in a musical comedy officer's uniform, of blue and silver with a red shako, the sight of his splendor nearly knocked me over.

He held out the parcel to me as his voice rose in a fulsome greeting, which began with an invocation to Hiven to bless me, his cherished friend, and finished up with a query as to whether there was time for a little liquid refreshment.

As I took the parcel he remarked—" 'Tis the birds av Paradise, me son, to grace the festive board. I slew 'em f'r a weddin' prisint to remind yez av the ould times. They'll ate alright, f'r betune ye an' me they was pheasants before they tuk to th' show. I've replaced um by a marmoset, who I've billed as a dwarf gorilla, so there's no need to imagine 'twas a great sacrifice."

I wondered if they'd taste of cod-liver oil, and determined to give them a decent burial directly the Colonel had gone. I didn't want to hurt his feelings by saying I'd rather not eat them, and I certainly didn't want to hurt my own by making a meal of the poor old creatures.

The glorious aspect of the Colonel's uniform decided me to hurry him into the vestry to await Pectora and Upottery, and he thereupon took the opportunity to give a general lecture to the verger and myself on the pitfalls of married life, to such a dire extent I meditated a bolt whilst there was yet time.

" 'Tis a lottery," he boomed gruesomely. "I've been through it four times, so I know. Me first was a fat lady, who'd been so used to public applause she niver could sittle to private life. The liss I say av the sicond the betther. Niver spake ill av the dead, me frinds. The thirrd lift me to run away with a livin' skiliton, an' I ran away fr'm the fourth wid about half me hair tore out. Take th' advice av a victim, an dirictly they start throwin' things quit."

This naturally encouraged me. By the time Pectora arrived I was in a nice cold perspiration, and my beastly collar-stud went on the loose again to add to my uncomfortable state. Trust a collar-stud to take the spirit out of a man. It has a

way of crawling round under your clothes that makes you feel as if you had about two hundred caterpillars meandering around you, and it generally finishes up by sliding into your right sock and jabbing you with its sharp edge on the most tender part of your ankle.

Hence I have but a confused idea of the ceremony. I remember the Colonel produced a book from somewhere and insisted on reading the whole service in a loud rich voice a word ahead of anyone, so that Pectora promised to obey the Colonel, and I promised to cherish him, and Upottery gave him away, and he was married to everyone present. Anyway, it sounded like that.

I noticed that getting married is very much like a visit to the dentist to have an extraction by gas. You are in a fearful stew before the event, there is a brief interim of swimmy chaos, and you come to to find you are minus a tooth or plus a wife, and there only remains to fee the clergyman or the dentist as the case may be and go home, and with your mind made up that you'll never go through it again.

In our desire not to attract attention we walked instead of drove back from the church. Pectora led with me, and the Colonel, with the birds of Paradise under one arm, and Upottery on the other, closed the procession. A cold breakfast awaited us at Pectoral Villa, and it speaks much for the placidity of Middewick that even the Colonel's uniform did not shake it from its utterable peace.

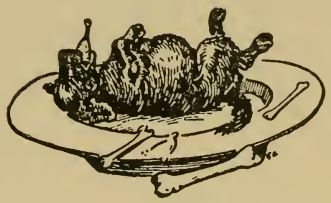
The pellet factory had been closed in honor of the event, but none of the workpeople had sufficient energy to turn up, save a recently-discharged one who threw stones until put to flight by the Colonel's sword.

The Demon had not attended the wedding. I had half expected to see him trot into the church with a dead rat or kitten in his mouth, but he chose to remain at home, possibly with an idea he could be of service in the kitchen preparing the collation which was to wind up the proceedings. He was not to be seen when we entered the house either.

"I wonder where the dog is?" said Pectora as we went in. "He generally runs when he hears me coming."

So he did when he heard me coming, but in the opposite direction.

We looked about for him, for we had got so used to his presence, and the way he had of tripping us up, it seemed quite strange to walk about without fear of a stumble.



R. I. P.

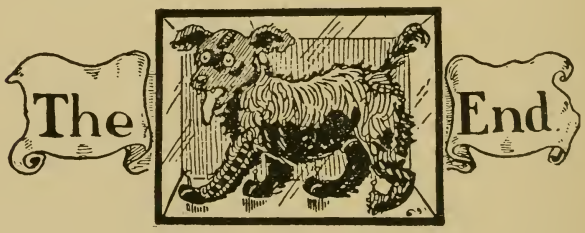
"Perhaps he is in here," I suggested as I opened the dining-room door, where the breakfast was laid.

He was.

There in the center of the table, peacefully reclining on a heap of empty dishes, and with the leg of a chicken protruding from the corner of his mouth lay the Demon, past all recall.

* * * * * *

And so, with his earthly shape (preserved by the taxidermic arts of Harker) under a glass case on the sideboard, end the moving adventures of My Dog and I.



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